Celebration in Worship

Fourth Sunday of Advent

**December 23, 2018**

We believe the words of Jesus: “I will never turn away anyone who comes to me.” John 6:37

## GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

*The first movement of worship in the Reformed Tradition is always one of remembering. In our tradition, praise is remembering. The Psalms of praise recount the mighty acts of God. That is why the call to worship is most often an adaptation of one of those Psalms. Remembering puts us in right relationship to God. It sparks thanksgiving, confession, a willingness to listen and respond.*

**PRAYER OF PREPARATION** *(Silently while preparing for worship)*

#  Holy God, whose coming to us in Jesus Christ we celebrate with joy and whose mercy is from generation to generation, visit us today to restore our memory of all your goodness to us. Trample our vanities and lift up our crushed and timid spirits so we all can participate fully and equally in the inheritance we have received from your hand. Amen.

# PRELUDE

# WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS *(Responsive)*

 The Lord be with you.

 **And also with you.**

Visitors, friends, members, welcome to worship! We are glad you are here. Please feel free to participate in ways that you feel led, and comfortable if you would just like to observe. We welcome your presence and invite you to join us for coffee in the Fellowship Hall after the worship service.

**ORGAN INTROIT**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP***(Reponsive)*Barbara Cookson

Leader: Before the majesty of God, we gather to worship with hope and joy.

 We come to hear God’s promises.

 **People: This is where we belong; here we are warmly greeted.**

 **Surely God will feed our deepest hunger.**

Leader: Before God’s strength and power, we bow down.

 With hope we look toward salvation and joy.

 **People: This is our home, where our lives are redirected.**

 **Surely God will show us new ways to live.**

Leader: Before the mercy of God, we lift our hearts in humble imagination.

 We welcome a new incarnation.

 **People: This day God is present with us; we feel it.**

 **Surely God is preparing us for a time of great joy.**

**\*MUSIC OF PRAISE 98 *To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary***  *Glory to God Hymnal*

**LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH**

**Reader 1:** Today we will light the fourth candle in our Advent wreath, the candle reminding us of God’s gift of love. Before we do that, let us remember the gifts of God symbolized by the other candles in the wreath: the light of hope, the light of peace, and the light of joy.

 *(Two purple candles and one pink candle in the Advent wreath are re-lit.)*

**Reader 2:** The fourth candle helps us to remember that God is love.

 *(The fourth candle is lit.)*

 The Bible tells us that it is because God loved the world so much that Jesus came. Mary sings her song in praise of God’s love and goodness. Because God loves us, we must love and care for others. Jesus came to show us how to love.

**Reader 1:** We are Jesus’ disciples in the world today. Jesus came to show us God’s way of love. This candle reminds us that God loves us, and that we must show that love by loving one another.

**All: Thank you, God, for loving us and for sending us Jesus to teach us about your love. As we prepare for Christ’s coming, strengthen us to love others as you love us.**

**\*HYMN 92 *While We Are Waiting, Come*** *Glory to God Hymnal*

**While we are waiting, come; With power and glory,come. Come, Savior, quickly come;**

**While we are watching, come. With power and glory, come. Come, Savior, quickly come.**

**Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel,**

**While we are waiting, come. While we are waiting, come. While we are waiting, come.**

**UNISON PRAYER**

 **Loving God, we thank you that you have fulfilled your promise. Emmanuel has come. We rejoice in your faithfulness. Give us courage to respond with love and compassion. Amen.**

# A READING FROM THE PROPHETS Micah 5:2-5a

**CONFESSION**

*The movement of Confession is a natural response to coming into the presence of that which is pure and holy and the destiny of all creation. In the face of something so much richer, deeper and wider than anything we can imagine, we recognize and confess that we are not God but called to live in harmony with God. Confession is the act of admitting how we fall short of all God intends for us, for the world, for all of creation*.

# CALL TO CONFESSION *(Leader)*

 God does not desire sacrifices and burnt offerings but a right heart and the dedication of our lives to God’s will. It is not in what we give up but what we take up that we find fulfillment and life. Let us confess that we fall short of full devotion to God’s will and seek God’s mercy that we might be restored and renewed.

# PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(Unison)*

 **We confess, almighty God, that we do not always look to the future with hope. Sometimes we let the challenges of the day weigh us down, and we surrender our strength to despair. With the news of Christ’s birth before us and the promise of mercy we know in Christ, we give thanks and recommit to live our lives with hope.**

**SILENT CONFESSION**

### PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

Proclamation is a natural movement out of confession and into the wholeness God intends for us. Proclamation uses the interpretation of the Church’s sacred texts as a way to help us get in touch with what we can do to come in closer harmony to that which we discern as God’s will for us and for humanity. In our tradition we do not take the Bible literally but claim its value as a witness to the directionality of God’s movement in human history. Thus it becomes a foundation for understanding who we are and what we should be doing to be in harmony with the Divine.

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON** *(Leader)*

 Faithful to God’s promises, God is merciful. God’s steadfast love endures forever! It is available to the least of us

 and the greatest. All whose spirits hunger for righteousness discover how richly they have been blessed. God has

 been doing great things for us. Let us commit to doing God’s will. May our spirits rejoice as we place our hope in God.

# \*GLORIA 581 *Glory Be to the Father* *Glory to God Hymnal*

# PASSING THE PEACE

*As an extension of God’s hospitality, let us greet one another with the sign of God’s peace.*

The Peace of Christ be with you.

 **And also with you.**

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE Jennifer Martin, Teaching Elder

**SPECIAL MUSIC**

Charlotte Coons, alto

**SCRIPTURE READING Luke 1:5--79**

**ANTHEM *Magnificat?***

# SERMON  *Wishing You an Hysterical Christmas* Lorne Bostwick, Teaching Elder

# *The preacher is a fallible human being just like members of the congregation. She or he has, however, been trained in the tradition and has been set aside to study and interpret the texts in ways consistent with the tradition’s understanding of God. It is not meant to be the only way to understand a text but as an informed proclamation to be used by the community of faith to discern what God is calling us to do and be in our lives together.*

**\*HYMN OF RESPONSE** **99 *My Soul Gives Glory to My God*** *Glory to God Hymnal*

**AN ADVENT AFFIRMATION**

**ADVENT PASTORAL PRAYER** Jennifer Martin, Teaching Elder

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND**

### THE LORD’S PRAYER (Unison)

**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.**

### RESPONDING TO THE WORD

*We the people of God hear God calling and we respond. Our prayers and offerings as well as affirmations of faith are the result of our hearing. In the worship service we speak our words of response, but God’s blessing empowers us to live our prayers, our offerings, our affirmations in the places we live and work and play.*

**AN INVITATION TO OFFERING** *(Leader)*

 In this season, we remember the greatest offering of all time, God’s gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. The only appropriate response is our own giving, which extends the grace of God into our time and place. What we place in the offering today symbolizes the depth of our desire to represent the incarnation. May we show our gratitude through our commitment to discipleship.

# OFFERTORY

**\*DOXOLOGY** 607 (Unison)

 Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

 Praise Christ, all people here below;

 Praise Holy Spirit evermore;

 Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.

**\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION** *(Leader)*

 Thank you, God, for the promise of salvation. We present our offerings as an act of gratitude and promise to serve your will. What we can never repay we pause to appreciate. May these offerings do much more than support our church. We dedicate ourselves and these gifts to honor Christ. May they bring joy and hope through ministry in the world. Amen.

**\*CLOSING HYMN 109 *Blest Be the God of Israel*** *Glory to God Hymnal*

**COMMISSION** *(Responsive)*

 Leader: Depart from this place with joy and hope.

 Carry your discipleship and service into the world.

 People: Our lives have been equipped to meet the world.

 Leader: Greet strangers as you have been greeted here.

 Feed them as you have been fed by the living God.

 People: Our estrangement has been overcome.

 We want to welcome neighbors into God’s family.

 Leader: God’s mercy continues from generation to generation.

 You are accepted and loved and sent forth.

 People: In gratitude and joy we accept our commission.

 Our spirits rejoice to share good news.

 Leader: Amen!
 People: Amen!

# BENEDICTION

# POSTLUDE David Bednall CCLI 1023827