

Celebration of Worship

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2017

9:30 A.M.

We welcome you to worship. We are glad that you are here! Nursery and Preschool care is available if you need it. Please sign the Friendship Pads so that we can get to know you better, and join us for coffee in the Narthex after the service.

Thoughts for Reflection

“Do you want to keep Christ in Christmas? Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, forgive the guilty, welcome the unwanted, care for the ill, love your enemies, and do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Steve Maraboli

“There has been only one Christmas – all the rest are anniversaries.”

W.J. Cameron

God Invites Us to Worship

WELCOME

RINGING THE CHURCH BELL

PRELUDE *Lullaby on “Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine”* Anon.

AN ADVENT CALL TO WORSHIP (responsively)

Call: To you, O God, belong honor and praise and glory.

Response: **You, O Lord, are the most high God. We lift up your name.**

Call: You are holy, righteous and mighty. There is none like you.

Response: **You are Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. We worship you.**

Call: Your wisdom is unsearchable. Your love is unfailing.

Response: **Your judgments are just. Your compassion is tender toward all.**

Call: To you, O God, belong honor and praise and glory.

Response: **Thanks be to God! We sing our doxology to you!**

* CAROL *Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates* # 8

WORDS FOR THE YOUNG AND THE YOUNG AT HEART

Message *Some Thoughts About Peace*

Prayer

SONG *While We Are Waiting, Come* Insert
(Children in Preschool through 2nd Grade are dismissed for Praise & Play.)

We Light the Advent Wreath – The Peace Candle

Luke 1:76 – 2:7 (MSG)

Reader: And Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied about his son, John: “And you, my child, ‘Prophet of the Highest,’ will go ahead of the Master to prepare his ways, present the offer of salvation to his people, the forgiveness of their sins.”

Reader: Through the heartfelt mercies of God, God’s sunrise will break in upon us, shining on those in the darkness, those sitting in the shadow of death, then showing us the way, one foot at a time, down the path of peace. The child (John) grew up, healthy and spirited. He lived out in the desert until the day that he made his prophetic debut in Israel.

Reader: About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was the governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral town to be accounted for.

Reader: So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David’s town, for the census. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant, and while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

All: **She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.**

The Candle of Peace is lit.

Reader: At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God’s praises:

All: **Glory to God in the heavenly heights. Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.**

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON *Titus 2:11-14* p. 969

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON *II Samuel 7:1-7, 16* p. 245

A PRAYER FOR THE SPIRIT’S ILLUMINATION

SERMON *A Dynasty of Grace*

Pastor Larry De Vuyst

A UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O Lord, in whom we trust: We confess that our fears have caused us to choose paths that lead us away from your promises. You have come to make your home in us, sending your Son to be Immanuel – God with us, God for us. Still, we turn away in fear.

Forgive our resistance to your habitation among us. Soften our resistance by your Spirit, that we will welcome your holy presence, living in its light joyously, witnessing faithfully to the hope it brings, until the day when every eye will see, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to your everlasting glory.

THE ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS (based on Isaiah 63:7-9)

The Lord has done for us that which he has accomplished according to his compassion and kindness. “Surely, they are my people.” And so, he has become our Savior. In all our distress God, too, was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved us! In his love and mercy he redeemed us; lifted us up and carried us. Praise God for our salvation! Amen.

* CAROL *In the Bleak Midwinter* # 36

BRINGING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS TO GOD

OFFERTORY *Advent Hymn* Besig
Chancel Choir

Evening has come in shadows of gray, and the winter wind blows bitter and cold.
All of the world in silence awaits the child the prophets have foretold.
Let us now prepare our hearts to receive him, filled with hope and free from fear.
Soon he will come to all who believe. The true Messiah will soon appear.

Come, thou long expected Jesus born to set thy people free.
Through the power of love redeemed us, let us find our rest in Thee.
Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King.
Born to reign in us for ever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.
He will come to guide and teach us, sent to earth from heaven above.
Come thou long expected Jesus, warm our hearts with peace, and with love.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION AND PRAISE

THE LORD’S PRAYER (Debts/debtors)

* CAROL *O Little Town of Bethlehem* # 44

ANNOUNCEMENTS

* BENEDICTION

* POSTLUDE *Angels We Have Heard on High* Wood