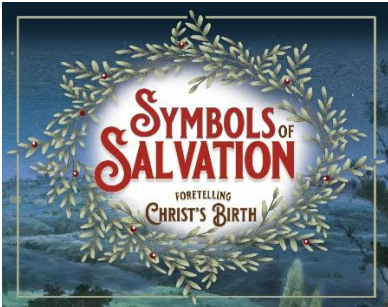


*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.  
May we together experience the presence of God*

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**We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord**



**Prelude**

**Welcome**

**Announcements/Joys & Concerns**

**JESUS, THE LIVING NATIVITY**

Christmas involves many symbols, from the ornaments on our trees to the gifts we place under those trees. But today, we do not gather under a symbol or to imagine something. We come to meet our Lord, who came in flesh from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit—just as God had promised long ago. This is not a parable, and the manger is no symbol. This is the truest of truths, and the manger held the real God incarnate, Jesus Christ, our Lord. He has come to embrace our fallen humanity, to wear our sin on the cross, and to die the death that sin caused, so that we might share in His divine life—forgiven, restored, and destined for a life death cannot overcome. Christmas is filled with symbols, but Jesus is the real thing, and His nativity is where God's love is incarnate for us and for our salvation. Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

**FIRST READING Isaiah 9:2-7**

**The Old Testament Reading for the Nativity of Our Lord is from Isaiah, the ninth chapter.**

*2The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shined.*

*3You have multiplied the nation;  
You have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before You  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.*

*4For the yoke of his burden,  
and the staff for his shoulder,  
the rod of his oppressor,*

*You have broken as on the day of Midian.  
5For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult  
and every garment rolled in blood*

*will be burned as fuel for the fire.  
6For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon His shoulder,  
and His name shall be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
7Of the increase of His government and of peace  
there will be no end,  
on the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
to establish it and to uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time forth and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

### **Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy**

Isaiah said that the Lord spoke to the king and said, "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven" (Isaiah 7:11 NRSV). But when the king refused, God would not be stopped. "Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14 NRSV).

**God wants us to know, even when we aren't sure ourselves. God wants us to experience God's presence, even when we think we can handle life on our own. God sends us signs of God's presence with us; all we need to do is keep our eyes open and look.**

"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, 'God is with us.'" When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus (Matthew 1:23-25 NRSV).

**We light these candles, the candle of joyous hope, of proclaimed peace, of deep everlasting joy, and today of presence that speaks of love, as a sign that no matter our circumstance, we know we are not alone.**

Light all four candles of the Advent wreath.

### **Opening Prayer**

**Gracious Father, You promised this day through the prophets. Grant us grace by Your Spirit to receive the Savior as Your Son in flesh, to rejoice that You have kept Your promise and delivered to us a Savior from sin and death, and to remember this love in all the days to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

### **\*HYMN OF PRAISE UMH#234 "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (verses 1-3)**

*Author: John F. Wade (ca. 1743)*

*Publication Date: 1989*

*Tune Information*

*Name: ADESTES FIDELES*

*Composer: John F. Wade (ca. 1743)*

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

**Refrain:**

**O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.**

**Refrain:**

**2. True God of true God, Light from Light Eternal,  
lo, he shuns not the Virgin's womb;  
Son of the Father, begotten, not created;  
(Refrain)**

**3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;  
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;  
(Refrain)**

## ***We Hear God's Word***

**Gospel Reading..... Luke 2:1-20**

### **New Revised Standard Version**

#### ***The Birth of Jesus***

*2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.[a]*

#### ***The Shepherds and the Angels***

*8 Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,[b] the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,[c] praising God and saying,*

*14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"[d]*

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, 19 and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

The Word of God for the People of God, **Thanks be to God!**

## Children's Sermon

### **FAITH HYMN UMH #240**

### **"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"**

*Author: Charles Wesley (1739)*

*Publication Date: 1989*

*Tune Information*

*Composer: Felix Mendelssohn (1840)*

**1. Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King;  
peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
join the triumph of the skies;  
with th'angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new born King!"**

**2. Christ, by highest heaven adored;  
Christ, the everlasting Lord;  
late in time behold him come,  
offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
hail th' incarnate Deity,  
pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus, our Emmanuel.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the new-born King!"**

**3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings,  
risen with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by,  
born that we no more may die,  
born to raise us from the earth,  
born to give us second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,**

## "Glory to the new born King!"

### "Message"

#### **PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE FOR ADVENT 4 (Referencing Isaiah 2:1-5; 11:1-10; 35:1-10; 7:10-16)**

In the hushed anticipation of your coming, O Lord, remind us that you are always with us, that like Joseph we might always be eager to fulfill your will, and be eager to pray:

O God, in days to come the mountain of your house will be established, and your joy shall reign. We pray for the church (especially...), that you might teach us your ways and that we might walk in your paths.

#### **Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.**

Out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and you, O God, shall judge between the nations. We pray for our nation, and all nations, that your peace would be manifest in every corner of the earth.

#### **Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.**

In your Kingdom, O Lord, wolves lie down with lambs and children play with serpents without fear. We pray for the sick, the suffering, and those in distress of any kind (especially...); that you would heal all injuries, comfort all grief, and settle all wrongs.

#### **Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.**

In your Kingdom, O Lord, even the wilderness and dry land are glad and rejoice. We pray for those who rejoice this week as they celebrate their birthday (especially... and anniversaries...); that they might obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing might flee away.

#### **Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.**

In the fulness of time, O God, you sent your son, to be born of our sister Mary. And his name was Emmanuel: God With Us. We thank you for your Presence with us, and we pray that you might be always present with those whom we love but see no longer.

#### **Come Lord Jesus, and hear our prayer.**

O Christ, hear our prayers, restore us, and show us the glorious light of your countenance, that we might be saved in the name of the one who came to this earth to walk amongst us we pray, Our Father...

**Offertory & Doxology (UM Hymnal 95)  
Offertory Prayer**

**(Wykoff only)**

*Holy God of hope and promise: As we bring you our offerings this day, so many of us are discouraged, trying to find our way. We need your sign, we need your Son, not as simply a reminder of history but as a new direction. Guide us by your signs on this day and as we begin the journey to Bethlehem once again. In the Savior's name, we pray. Amen. (Isaiah 7:10-16)*

**\*Departing Hymn #239 "Angels We Have Heard on High" (verse 1 & 3)**

*Arranger: Edward Shippen Barnes (1937)*

*Harmonizer: Austin C. Lovelace (1964)*

*Copyright: Harm. © 1964 Abingdon Press*

**1 Angels we have heard on high  
sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply  
echoing their joyous strains.**

**Refrain:**

**Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

**Gloria, in excelsis Deo!**

**3 Come to Bethlehem and see  
Christ whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee,  
Christ the Lord, the newborn King. (Refrain)**

**Benediction**

God still sends signs. Open your eyes to the possibility of grace.

God still sends signs. Embrace the child of hope.

God still sends signs. Let the song of joy send you forth in peace.

Go with the God who still sends signs.

**\*POSTLUDE**