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*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.*

*May we together experience the presence of God.*

*\* - You are invited to stand at these times.... if you are able*

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



**Prelude–Welcome–Announcements**

**Opening Meditation**

Joy is at the heart of the journey through Advent to Christmas: Joy in the knowledge of what God has done throughout the ages, joy in the realization that God is able and that God does change things for the better, joy in the assurance that God can enter into our lives no matter what our situation may be. The Apostle Paul calls us to a life of rejoicing:

- .. to live a life full of rejoicing and gentleness
- ... to put aside worry in the confidence that the Lord is near
- .... to lift our requests in prayer, with thanksgiving
- ..... to trust that the Peace of God will guard our hearts and minds.

Advent is a time when we can clean out the inner stables of our lives so that new life can be born, our spirits may be refreshed, and our lives may be renewed in the joy of salvation. Today I invited our readers to come forward as we light the third candle of Advent

**Third Sunday of Advent Litany**

Last Sunday we lit the candle of peace. We light it and the candle of hope again as we remember that Christ, who was born in Bethlehem, will come again to judge the world and bring it everlasting peace.

*\*\*Light the first and second candle of Advent\*\**

When the angel Gabriel told Mary that a special child would be born to her she was filled with joy. She sang a song that began with the words: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior.

Just as the birth of Jesus gave great joy to his mother, so his presence in the world gave joy to those who had none before. He healed them and gave them hope and peace when they believed in him. From hope, peace, and love grows joy.

Today we light the third candle of Advent which is the Candle of Joy. We light the candle of joy to remind us that when Jesus is born in us we have joy and that through him there will be everlasting joy on earth.

**\*\*Light the Pink candle of Joy\*\***

Let us pray: Thank you God for the joy you give us. We ask that as we wait for all your promises to come true, and for Christ to come again, that you would remain present with us. Help us today, and every day to worship you, to hear your word, and to do your will by sharing your joy with each other. We ask it in the name of the one who was born in Bethlehem. Amen.

**Advent Song Verse 3 – FWS #2090**

*Words Mary Lu Walker*

*Music: Mary Lu Walker*

**Light the Advent Candle three.  
Think of heavenly harmony.  
Angels signing “Peace on Earth”  
At the blessed Savior’s birth.**

**Candle, candle burning bright,  
Shining in the cold winter night;  
Candle, candle burning bright,  
Fill our hearts with Christmas light**

**Call to Worship:**

One: Rejoice in the Lord always.

**All: We come to worship and rejoice.**

One: Again, I say "rejoice!"

**All: We come to worship and rejoice!**

One: Let your gentleness be known to everyone.

**All: We come to worship and rejoice.**

One: The Lord is near!

**All: We come to worship and rejoice the One who is with us!**

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**Generous God, we thank you for bringing us to this season of faith, hope, and love. As we look at our lives, we see evidence of the countless ways that you have provided for our needs. Let gratitude well up in our hearts and overflow in generosity to others. Draw us outward to see ways that we can joyfully share what you have given. Let our acts of kindness as a church bear good fruit in the world. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Hymn UMH #224 “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”**

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**1 Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice;  
give ye heed to what we say:  
Jesus Christ was born today.**

**Ox and ass before him bow,  
and he is in the manger now.  
Christ is born today!  
Christ is born today!**

**2 Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice;  
now ye hear of endless bliss:  
Jesus Christ was born for this!  
He has opened heaven's door,  
and we are blest forevermore.  
Christ was born for this!  
Christ was born for this!**

**3 Good Christian friends, rejoice  
with heart and soul and voice;  
now ye need not fear the grave:  
Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all  
to gain his everlasting hall.  
Christ was born to save!  
Christ was born to save!**

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

### **Gospel Reading .....Luke 3:7-18 (NRSV)**

7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 And the crowds asked him, "What, then, should we do?" 11 In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

15 As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,[a] 16 John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with[b] the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18 So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.

## **Children's Moments**

### **\*Faith Hymn FWS #2092 "Like a Child"**

*Author: Daniel Charles Damon*

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*Tune Information*

*Name: LIKE A CHILD*

*Composer: Daniel Charles Damon*

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**1 Like a child love would send to reveal and to mend,  
like a child and a friend, Jesus comes.  
Like a child we may find claiming heart, soul, and mind,  
like a child strong and kind, Jesus comes.**

**2 Like a child we will meet, ragged clothes, dirty feet,  
like a child on the street, Jesus comes.  
Like a child we once knew coming back into view,  
like a child born anew, Jesus comes.**

**3 Like a child born to pray and to show us the way,  
like a child here to stay, Jesus comes.  
Like a child we receive all that love can conceive,  
like a child we believe, Jesus comes.**

### **\*Meditation\***

#### **Joys/Concerns**

#### **Prayers of the People**

Almighty God, true Hope of all the earth,  
Prepare in us a warm and welcoming place,  
where we may receive the King of Creation with gladness and kindness and faithfulness.

In the center of our crowded days, create a quiet place of light and peace,  
where we can keep these holidays as the holy days they were meant to be.  
Help us help those whom you hold in special care for the sake of their special needs.  
For them we ask gifts that only you can give.

To those in mourning, to whom the sounds of merrymaking are an unrelenting agony,  
give a deepened awareness of your arms around them and peaceful certainty that your  
other arm is around the loved one they are missing.

To those whose hearts are breaking with sorrow and worry, reveal how your coming  
brings power and peace for just such times as these.  
To those who are sick, open a window of insight so that they can glimpse the healing you  
plan for your whole creation and so await their own healing with patient endurance...

For those far separated from loved ones, let their hearts experience the spiritual joy of concentrating their thoughts and worship upon you, who so loved the world that you gave your only Son.

You sent him not with ribbons and wrappings, but with power and grace, whether we have been naughty or nice. Receive our thanks, our praise and our prayers for Jesus' sake as join in the prayer he taught us to pray....

### **Offertory/Doxology/Prayer**

God of Might and Mercy: Our days and nights are filled with jolly songs, festive parties, and extravagant gifts, beautifully wrapped. We confess we just don't want to hear a call to repentance in the midst of our revelry. Yet you remind us that without hearing a call to repent, we risk missing the whole point of Christ's coming. We bring our gifts this morning to your altar, knowing they are not what they ought to be, and we are not who we hoped to be. And in this acknowledgement we become ready to hear the call of repentance and more ready to welcome a Savior. This we pray in that holy name above all others, Jesus the Christ. Amen

### **\*Departing Hymn UMH #454 "Open My Eyes, That I May See"**

**1 Open my eyes that I may see  
glimpses of truth thou hast for me.  
Place in my hands the wonderful key  
that shall unclasp and set me free.  
Silently now I wait for thee,  
ready, my God, thy will to see.  
Open my eyes, illumine me,  
Spirit divine!**

**2 Open my ears that I may hear  
voices of truth thou sendest clear,  
and while the wave notes fall on my  
ear,  
ev'rything false will disappear.**

**Silently now I wait for thee,  
ready, my God, thy will to see.  
Open my ears, illumine me,  
Spirit divine!**

**3 Open my mouth and let me bear  
gladly the warm truth ev'rywhere.  
Open my heart and let me prepare  
love with thy children thus to share.  
Silently now I wait for thee,  
ready, my God, thy will to see.  
Open my mouth, illumine me,  
Spirit divine!**

### **Sending Forth**

Surely God is our salvation, we will trust in God and not be afraid, for the Lord God is our Strength and Might. Shout aloud and sing for joy . . . for great in our midst is the Holy One of Zion.

### **Postlude**