

~Gathering the Family of God~

The Peal of Our Church Bell

Prelude *Prelude in C Major* Jaak Nikolas Lemmens

Welcome

Call to Worship (Choir) *Still, Still, Still*

Call to Worship

One: We are here because we have heard a promise of peace

All: and we have faith its day will come.

One: We have heard a rumor of justice

All: and we have faith its day will come.

One: We have heard a whisper of hope

All: and we have faith its day will come.

One: We have heard a hint of love

All: and we have faith its day will come.

One: We have heard of the birth of the Christ-child

All: and we have faith his day is here.

One: Welcome to Christmas! Welcome to worship!

Opening Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the birth of your Son. Help us to prepare again for his coming: to prepare inwardly, in our hearts, and outwardly, in our world.

We not only commemorate the birth of Jesus, but celebrate his presence and continued rebirth in our hearts.

We not only celebrate the meaning of his life, but rejoice at his continued presence and involvement in our world.

We thank you for that moment more than 2000 years ago, and for this moment, and for those to come, when the miracle happens again, and he is here and with us yet again. Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Candles

One: On the fourth Sunday of Advent we again light the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy, and we light the fourth candle, the candle of Love. The day is almost here when true love is born and life is renewed. May the love of God embrace us as we wait for his coming.

All: With Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John we tell the story of Jesus, the child of Bethlehem, who came to save us, and is coming again in glory.

***Gathering Hymn** *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* # 82

***Prayer of Confession (unison)**

O God, you search us out and know us, and all that we are is open to you. We confess that we have sinned. When we make no room for Christ, and fail to welcome him into our lives, in your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.

When we sanitize your birth place and erase from memory the poor and displaced, In your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.

When we sing sweet sentiments over Christ's birth, and fail to rejoice over his everyday presence, In your mercy, Lord, forgive us and heal us.

We renounce evil; We claim your love; We choose to be made whole.

Silent Confession**Words of Assurance**

One: Friends, hear the Good News! Jesus Christ, whose coming was promised by angels, is Emmanuel, God With Us, and has come to save his people from our sins. Therefore, in confidence and hope we can proclaim:

All: We are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

***Gloria Patri**

581

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen, Amen.

Tune: Gloria Patri, Henry W. Greatorex, 1851, Public Domain.

~Hearing God's Word~

God's Word for little Ears**Heifer Project-Recognition of Birthdays and Anniversaries,**

A Song of Blessing (Adapted from an Irish Blessing, Tune: Amazing Grace)

All: May Joy and peace surround you, contentment at your door, And happiness be with you now, God bless you evermore.

Prayer for Illumination (unison)

Holy God, as your angel spoke to Joseph, speak to us now. Open to us the words of scripture that we may hear them with renewed vision and be moved to act with compassion toward those who are lost, alone, or in need of Christ's love. Amen.

Old Testament

Isaiah 7:10-16

page 637

One: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

page 540

One: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Anthem*It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

arr. by Dennis & Nan Allen

Epistle

Romans 1:1-7

page 152

One: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

New Testament

Matthew 1:18-25

page 1

One: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Message *What We Can Learn from Joseph* Rev. Terry Epling

***Hymn** *O God in Whom All Life Begins* #308

~Responding to God's Word~

***Affirmation of Faith**

All: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen. [The Apostles Creed]

Invitation to Become a Joyful Giver

Giving of our Tithes and Offerings & Friendship Pad

Please take a moment to sign your name and contact information in the pew pad. You may also share any joys or concerns on the cards in the pews. Place them in the offering plate for inclusion in the prayers of the people.

Offertory *Love, Divine* Hans Klotz

***Doxology** *Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow* # 606
***Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: Amen.***

***Prayers of the People and Pastoral Prayer**

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.

*** Closing Hymn** *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* #119

***Life in Our Church Community**

***Choral Benediction** *Go, Tell It on the Mountain* African American Spiritual

***Benediction**

***Postlude** *Fanfare-Toccata* Thomas Richner

**Please stand, if you are able.
Electronic aid for the hearing impaired is available from the usher.*