

4th Sunday of Advent

December 20, 2015

Scriptural Meditation

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. *Isaiah 9:6*

Gathering the Family of God~

The Peal of Our Church Bell

Welcome and Greeting One Another with the Peace of Christ

Prelude

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

arr. by M. Hayes

Call to Worship

One: It's almost Christmas Eve!

All: There is still so much to be done.

One: Take a breath and take time to hear some good news.

All: Let us learn about Mary and God's wonderful love.

One: Today we will hear a story of surprising commitment.

All: Open our ears to hear Mary's story.

One: Are you up for the challenge to believe in all that God can do?

All: Open our hearts, Lord, that we may be ready.

Prayer of Invocation

* Gathering Song

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

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*Prayer of Reconciliation

Let us remain standing and express ourselves to God

All: Lord, we are so excited. Christmas Eve is almost here. We are impatient and want to jump ahead to hear the whole story. Slow us down again, Lord. Cause us to look at the blossoming of the branch and remind us that your love is blossoming in our lives. As we hear Mary say "Yes!" to God's good news, help us to remember that God continually calls us to be those who will bear the good news to those in need. Forgive us when we forget to do that. Heal our wounds and bind up our spirits. Enable us to go into your world offering our lives, our gifts, our talents, for your glory. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

*A Time for Contemplation (a private time for you and God)

*Assurance of Forgiveness

One: God's love and faithfulness have been at work in you.

You are healed and forgiven. Rejoice in God's love and blossom. Friends, believe the good news of the Gospel.

All: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

*Gloria (Adapted from # 113 *Angels We Have Heard on High*)

All: Glo-ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o!

Glo-ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o!

Text: French Carol, trans. By James Chadwick, Music: French Carol, arr. by Edward Shippen Barnes
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Lighting of our Advent Wreath (children are welcome to come forward)

The circle of the wreath reminds us of God, his eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning and no end. The green of the wreath speaks of the hope that Christians have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. Last week we lit the candle of hope. Today we light the fourth candle, **the Candle of Love**.

Advent Wreath Song

He Came Down

(adapted from # 137)

All: He came down that we may have hope;

He came down that we may have hope;

He came down that we may have hope,

Hal-le-lu-jah for-ever more.

v. 2) **He came down that we may have peace;**

He came down that we may have peace;

He came down that we may have peace,

Hal-le-lu-jah for-ever more.

v. 3) **He came down that we may have joy;**

He came down that we may have joy;

He came down that we may have joy,

Hal-le-lu-jah for-ever more.

v. 4) **He came down that we may have love;**

He came down that we may have love;

He came down that we may have love,

Hal-le-lu-jah for-ever more.

Text: Traditional Cameroon, Music: Traditional Cameroon; trans. and arr. by John Bell
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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.

~Hearing God's Word~

Prayer for Understanding God's Word

All: Lord, be with us this morning as we encounter Mary and hear of the wondrous news that she received. Remind us that, like Mary, each one of us is a bearer of your Good News. We are called to proclaim hope, peace, joy, and love in your name. Open our hearts and our spirits today to receive with great joy the love that you have for us. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Old Testament Lesson

Micah 5:2-5a

p.865

One: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Canticle of Mary *The Magnificat, (My Soul Gives Glory to My God)* # 99
v. 1 & 2—Women, v. 3—Men, v. 4—All, v. 5—Voices only

Anthem *Hallelu* by Stephan Paulus
Down in a valley, sing hallelu! Mary had a baby, sing hallelu! What did she name Him, sing hallelu!
Named him Jesus, sing hallelu!

New Testament Epistle Hebrews 10:1-10 page 224
One: The Word of the Lord. **All: Thanks be to God**

Gospel Reading Luke 1:39-45 page 57

Elizabeth: Mary?
Mary: Hello, Elizabeth. I greet you in the name of God.
Elizabeth: Mary, I greet you in the name of the One who is my Lord, the One you carry in your womb.
Mary: How could you know this?
Elizabeth: The Holy Spirit has shown me that God's promises have been fulfilled through you. Your faith has enabled God to work through you to bring about the peace we have longed for.
Mary: The Spirit has shown you the truth. I have been blessed beyond my wildest dreams, for God has chosen me to help birth those dreams we all have for justice and peace.

All: Holy Spirit, come and fill us with faith so that we, too, might work with God to bring about the coming of the One who brings us peace.

Message *Affirming the Impossible* Pastor Kim Nelson
~Responding to God's Word~

***Affirmation of Faith**

Let us stand and affirm our faith.

One: Jesus was born in a barn because there was no room available in the inn. The innkeeper and most of the people in Bethlehem that night thought he was nobody, but we say,

All: He is the Christ!

One: Jesus made friends with everyone. He ate dinner with Zaccheus, the cheating tax-collector. He healed foreigners. He touched lepers. Lots of people said he was a troublemaker, but we say,

All: He is the Christ!

One: Jesus was a teacher. Crowds of people gathered on hillsides to hear him speak about God's love. The teachers in the Temple said he was wrong about God's love, but we say,

All: He is the Christ!

One: Jesus said, "Love your enemies," "Give to those in need," and "Those who lose their life for my sake will save it." Most people thought he was crazy, but we say,

All: He is the Christ!

One: Jesus was arrested, tried, and sentenced to die on a cross. The political and religious leaders thought they were rid of him, but he rose, and he lives. We know that ..

All: He is the Christ!

One: When Jesus said, "If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget himself, carry his cross, and follow me," most people went home. But we stay, and we say,

All: He is the Christ!

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.

Offertory "O Little Town of Bethlehem" arr. by W. Held

***Doxology** *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow* (# 675, verse 4)

**All: 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. A-men.**

Tune: Tallis' Canon, Whole Psalter 1561, Public Domain.

Prayers of the People followed by The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

All: 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.

Sung Prayer Response *While We Are Waiting, Come* (#92, v.1 & 3)

**All: 1) While we are waiting come; while we are waiting, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting come.
3) Come, Savior, quickly come; come, Savior, quickly come.
Jesus our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting come.**

Text: Claire Cloninger, 1986, Music: Don Cason, 1986

~Going Forth to Serve God~

Life in Our Church Community

***Song of Going Forth** *Once in Royal David's City* # 140

***Benediction**

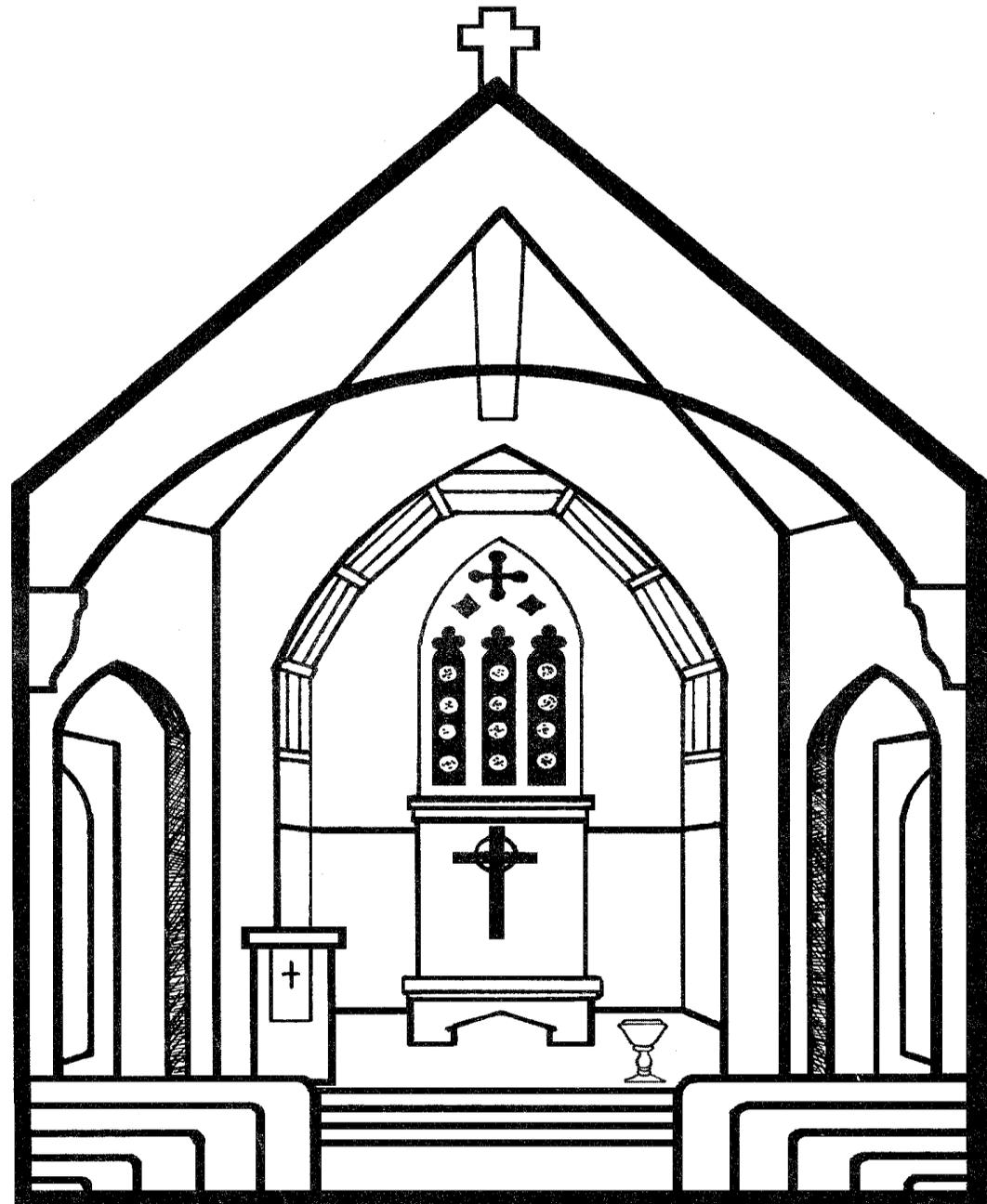
***Postlude** *Noel* by D. Wood

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***Please stand, if you are able.**

Electronic aid for the hearing impaired is available from the usher.

Music printed and recorded for congregational use only under CCLI # 11373529



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