

The Season of Advent



3rd Sunday in Advent
December 17th, 2023

Gathering

During the Prelude we invite you to greet one another with love outside the Chapel, and allow those within to meditate, pray or just listen.

Prelude “The Bells of Christmas” arr. Owen Griffin

Welcome

*Advent Candle Lighting - “Come, Child of Light” vs. 4

*congregation please stand in body or spirit

Leader: Advent calls us to joyful anticipation of the Messiah, but sometimes joy is lacking.

People: Restore us, O God.

Leader: When our delight is overshadowed by worry and fear,

People: Restore us, O God.

Leader: When problems loom large and solutions are elusive,

People: Restore us, O God.

Leader: When relationships are painful and hurt results,

People: Restore us, O God.

Leader: When busyness and activity crowd out what is meaningful and important,

People: Restore us, O God.

Leader: When disappointments mount and disillusionment descends,

People: Restore us, O God.

Leader: Joy to the world! The Lord is come!

People: Restore to us, O God, the joy of your salvation!

*Opening Hymn #133 “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

Poem

by Lindy Thompson

Children sing

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart!

and I agree with that sentiment.

There is a lot of joy available,
worthy of being mentioned four times,
but the *down* part is true, too.

Very often, the joy is buried deep below the surface,
hidden under layers of information and distraction,
a polished stone under a stack of old newspapers.

So much negative in the world today,
so much trash,
so much fear.

We bury our faces in our phones
because machines are much easier than people,
and the garbage keeps piling on,
and the joy becomes more and more a distant memory.

But joy is our birthright.

The angels told the shepherds they were bringing
good news of a great joy that will be to all people.

The good news is for us,
but we have to make room for it.

Our minds are busier
than a guest house in Bethlehem during a census —
too full for one more family,
even a small one.

The birth is coming,
the joy is promised.

May we make ready,
may we make room.

May we join together,
help each other,
and sanctify space
for God's great gift of joy.

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

Loving God, have mercy on us. We are not ready for your coming. We live in sin, as though there were no justice. We live in fear, as though there were no grace. Forgive us, Lord. Show us your mercy and steadfast love and restore us that we may live in the joy of your presence and love. For the sake of Christ we pray.

Time for Silent Confession

Assurance of Pardon

Leader: In Jesus Christ, the Lord has done great things for us. Even if we have gone out in tears, God brings us home shouting for joy.
Hear this good news: 3

People: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Joy to the world! Amen.

*Musical Response #113 “Angels We Have Heard On High” (*Refrain*)

*Passing of the Peace of Christ

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

The Word

Prayer for Illumination

Scriptures: Psalm 126 and Luke 1:46-55

Leader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church!

People: Thanks be to God.

Sermon “Restore Us, O God: Advent Joy”

*Hymn #82 “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”

Time for Response to Sermon

Joys and Concerns and Pastoral Prayer

Leader: Lord in your mercy,

People: Hear our prayers

The Lord’s Prayer

Announcements

Sending

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

*Benediction

Postlude

“Gloria!!!”

Michael W. Smith

Feel free to stand, chat and generally share in Fellowship as the Postlude sends us out into the world in Love.

We welcome all who worship with us this day. May you experience God’s presence and find inspiration for your journey of faith. This morning the leaders in worship are:

Rev. Michelle Fincher, Pastor; **Heidi Thomas**, Music Director;

Otiwaa Ampofo and **Diana Ngon**, Advent Candle Readers;

Katherine Huff, Liturgist; **Ryan Hodel**, Zoom Host

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