

Grace Presbyterian Church

18 December 2022

9:30am

Advent, Fourth Sunday

*Rooted in Christ, We Gather in Spirit.
Welcome to Worship!*



We Gather

PRELUDE

WELCOME, and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call to Worship

God's people ask for signs of God's presence.

(whispered) Emmanuel! God with us!

From ancient times, they have called upon God for salvation.

(a little louder) Emmanuel! God with us!

"Shine your face upon us," they cry.

(louder still) Emmanuel! God with us!

And an angel said to Joseph:

(full throttle) Emmanuel! God with us!

Come, let us worship God!

Opening prayer

Amazing embodied God,
whose spirit rested upon Joseph,
we praise and adore you.

Word in flesh, Emmanuel,
always you are with us.

We praise and adore you.

Amen.

OPENING HYMN* *People, Look East* No. 105 vs. 1,3,5

ADVENT CANDLES - The 4th Candle - LOVE¹

The Candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy are relit.

¹ Seasons of the Spirit- December 19, 2021

For the child leaping in Mary's womb,
we light this candle.

For the labor required
by you and by me to bring peace.
we light this candle.

For generation upon generation that needs
this blessing again.
we light this candle.

For the will to imagine another world is possible.
we light this candle.

For the fullness
of the Holy Spirit.
we light this candle.

For the work of birth and rebirth, we experience on Christmas.
we light this candle.

*In the bleakness of this moment,
we yearn for light that shines
through all our fears
as a beacon for all people.
That light comes into the world
and is never extinguished.
We need light to hold on to that hope, peace, and joy,
and so today, we light the candle
of LOVE*

ADVENT HYMN* Longing for Light No. 314 vs. 1,3,5

Prayer of Confession

Friends, knowing that we pray to a God who longs for us
to draw closer, who longs for us to always be more
honest and courageous in naming our failings as well as
our strengths, let us unburden our hearts with the ways
we have fallen short of God's vision for our lives.

God, who is with us, closer even than our breath.

Reveal to us the Savior.

Like so many before us, we fall short of your hope for us and need the hope of salvation.

Reveal to us the Savior.

Like David and the prophets of old, we need your promise of love.

Reveal to us the Savior.

Like Mary and Joseph, may we have peace and joy.

Reveal to us the Savior.

Like all the saints who have gone before us, grant us the gift of life.

Reveal to us the Savior.

Free us from the ways we have failed to be your people, your children. Free us from the ways we have hurt, ignored, and fallen short.

Reveal to us the Savior.

Amen.

Words of affirmation

Adapted from Isaiah 7:14

Friends, hear these words from scripture.

The prophet Isaiah declares, "A young woman is with child, and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel," which means "God with us."

May we take the radical realities of God's forgiving love deep into our hearts and know that we are indeed forgiven, freed from our sins, and freed for God's love!

Friends, hear the Good News.

Our gracious God calls us from our warring ways and grants us the freedom to join God's new vision of a peaceful world.

Friends, we are free from the seduction of hatred, free to construct peace.

We declare together now;

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

(silent reflection)

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Sung introduction Hymn No. 400 v. 5

I Rejoiced

Called to be one in Christ Jesus, we are made to love one another in unity and grace.

Peace be with you!

And also with you.

(lift your hand in a gesture of love and peace)

We Reflect

A TIME FOR CHILDREN & THE YOUNG AT HEART

The Sand Hills Preschool Children's Chorus.

Carla Lynch, Director

Advent Proclamation: *"One More Week Till He Arrives"*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION²

**Lord, open our hearts and minds
by the power of your Holy Spirit,
that as the Scriptures are read,**

² Seasons of the Spirit- December 19, 2021

**and your Word is proclaimed,
we may receive with confidence and joy
what you say to us today. Amen.**

OT PSALM: sung: I Rejoiced Hymn No. 400 Vs. 1, 2, 4

OT SCRIPTURE LESSON

Isaiah 2: 1-5

NT SCRIPTURE LESSON:

Romans 1: 1-7

SERMON

Your Name is Called

Rev. Donald M. Pitches

We Respond

HYMN* Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

No. 119

MISSION STATEMENT

To Know, Love, and Serve God

VISION STATEMENT

As an open and affirming congregation, we genuinely welcome people of all ages, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, beliefs, and those who are cognitively and/or physically challenged. Our vision is that each of us is a minister seeking to know Christ, grow in discipleship, and embody God's love in the world.

Familiar Carol Sing: Two verses of each.

113 Angels We Have Heard on High vs. 1,2

129 Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming vs. 1,2

132 Good Christian Friends, Rejoice vs. 1,2

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord, in your mercy/in thanksgiving,

R+ Hear our prayer.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel! We are so close to your arrival. Be with us as we finish waiting.

You told people for eons not to fear, and yet sometimes we do. You gave us dreams to guide us and to pull us closer to your vision of the realm you create.

We see places of injustice, poverty, oppression, and pain in the world.

Come to us in them. Come to us and show us what we need to do to change them.

Come to us and be with us as we find that sometimes all we can do is watch and wait and see you at work in the ordinary parts of our lives.

O come, o come Emmanuel and be with us, restore us, help us. In Christ's name, we pray as has been taught, saying...

**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.**

OUR GIFTS OF SACRIFICE and THANKSGIVING

Invitation to the Offering

We see God in the ordinary places of our lives – sometimes without realizing it. We see God with us when we hold a hand, offer a smile, or feed a stranger. God is with us when we offer the first fruits of our labors, as

God's people have done for generations. Let us give God the fruits of our labors as an act of worship and gratitude.

Thanks to all those whose gifts and offerings have sustained the church all year. You can give online by visiting the church website.

Musical Meditation Vince DiMura

Doxology God, We Honor You*

No. 709

**God, we honor you.
God, we trust in you.
God, we worship and adore you.**

**Take what we bring,
offered to you.
Teach us to show your abundant blessings.**

**Alleluia, alleluia,
alleluia, Amen.**

Prayer of Dedication.

God, may these ordinary gifts of cash, coin, check, card swipes, and electronic transactions honor you. May the everyday gifts of our lives honor you and enable the work we do in your name. Amen.

We Are Sent

CLOSING HYMN Arise; Your Light Has Come*

No. 744

BENEDICTION*

An angel came to Joseph and Mary and proclaimed:

Emmanuel! God with us!

In this final week before Christmas day, may our waiting proclaim

Emmanuel! God with us!

Go forth in joy to tell the world:

Emmanuel! God with us!

Having worshipped God, let us go and live in our world as Jesus taught us.

Amen.

POSTLUDE

****Indicates, please stand in body and, or in spirit.***

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Special days

Today: Advent Bible Study 11 a.m. John's Gospel

December 18 – Chanukah begins (Judaism)

December 24 – Christmas Eve Worship @ 7 p.m. Candlelight and Carols, A story for children.

December 25 - Christmas Day Worship @ 9:30 a.m. Come as you are! In PJs and slippers for Christmas Carols and coffee.

December 18 – Chanukah begins (Judaism).

Chanukah is a holiday that cannot be found in the Hebrew Bible or Tanach. Its scriptural roots are found in the books of I and II Maccabees, which appear in some Christian Bibles in the Apocrypha section. These books detail a small group of Jewish zealots who feared that the rest of the Jewish community was too ready to adopt aspects of Hellenistic culture into their Jewish lives. In turn, these zealots

despised ideas that were not purely Jewish.

Unfortunately, the Syrian Greeks who ruled Judea were not satisfied with integrating the two cultures but preferred annihilating Jewish culture and religion. The Syrian Greeks, led by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, defiled the Temple in Jerusalem. The zealots, known as the Maccabees, fought a guerilla war against Antiochus in 164 BCE, recaptured the temple, and rededicated it. However, when the Maccabees finally rededicated the temple, they were not in time to observe the festival of Sukkot – which lasts, you guessed it, eight days.

Today, Jews light a nine-candled menorah, known as a Chanukiah, in observance of these events. (The ninth candle, known as the shamash or "servant," is used to light the other candles.) Today Chanukah concentrates on the themes of religious freedom, the balance of living as Jews in a dominant non-Jewish culture, and even miracles, too.
Rabbi Adam Morris