

The Presbyterian Church of Okemos
December 17, 2023
Third Sunday of Advent



Preparation: “Reading the Bible with wonder inspires passion: passion for God, passion for community, passion for life and for all that makes life whole and good. ... Bible-inspired wonder is what drives many to commit themselves to lives of justice and mercy, wisdom and hope, joy and perseverance, charity and responsibility. To borrow from Judaism, such passion leads to *tikkun olam*, to “repairing the world,” or put another way, to a life of self-giving love for the world. -- Professor and author, the Rev. Dr. William P. Brown

Gathering As a People of God

Prelude

Sinfonia from the *Christmas Oratorio*
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, organist

J.S. Bach

Choral Introit

Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light
PCO Chancel Choir

*** Call to Worship**

Sean Clark, Liturgist

One: Our God can part the sea.

All: God can bring water from a rock, and provide bread in the desert.

One: Our God can walk on water.

All: He can heal the sick, and turn water into wine.

One: Our God sets the stars in the sky.

All: God hears our voice when we cry, and is closer than our own breath.

One: There is nothing our God cannot do.

All: Let us stand in awe. Let us worship God with wonder.

*** Hymn #96**

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry, vs. 1-4
[Winchester New]

Prayer of Confession

Rebecca Mattern

One: If you spend any time with a child, you will quickly notice that children see the world differently. For a child, a ladybug is a miracle. A pine tree is a wonder. Curiosity is a love language, and water is not only for survival, but for joy. As adults, we forget this language of awe and wonder, and when we do, we distance ourselves from God. In confession, we have the opportunity to close that distance. So let us return to God with hearts wide open. Join me in the prayer of confession:

All: Holy God, somewhere in our childhood we face pressure to outgrow awe. We turn into adults who obsess over data and facts. We praise those who have answers, and assume that wonder is an answerless game. Forgive us for closing that door to you.

Remind us that the kingdom of God belongs to children. Teach us the ways of awe and wonder, so that like Zechariah, when we find ourselves speechless, our first words will be words of praise. With hearts open wide, we pray. *Silent prayer.* Amen.

Promise of the Gospel and Passing of the Peace

Rebecca Mattern

One: Family of faith, just as we marvel at mountains and newborns, at sunrises and sunsets, God marvels at us. There is nothing you could do or leave undone that could prevent God from loving you. So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

All: We are forgiven. We are loved. We belong to God. Amen

One: As a forgiven people, let us greet each other, sharing the peace of Christ. The peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you. *Please greet your fellow worshippers in ways you feel comfortable.*

*** Act of Praise #583**

Gloria, Gloria

Jacques Berthier

[Gloria]

Will be sung once by soloist; please join on the second time

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

The Word

Prayer of Illumination

Rebecca Mattern

God of the universe, make our hearts porous. Open our eyes, as if for the first time, so that we might see your world with awe and wonder once again. Help us greet this text with awe and gratitude before we begin dissecting it for truth. For I am confident that in doing so, we will not only find you in the hallways of our thoughts, but in the pathways of our hearts. With gratitude we pray: keep us open. Amen.

Lighting the Advent Candle: Joy and Children's Message

Roelofs Family

Old Testament Scripture

Psalm 126

Chris Roelofs and Anne Uitvlugt

Journey to Bethlehem

Nativity: Mary & Joseph

Aria, Reiland

Musical Response #88 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, vs. 6*

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;

disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

New Testament Scripture

Luke 1:57-66

Pastor Lisa Schrott

Sermon

How does a weary world rejoice? We allow ourselves to be amazed.

Pastor Lisa Schrott

Anthem

Ding Dong Merrily on High

arr. Fred Gramann

Handbell Choir

Irene Shutt, Director

Responding to the Word
Invitation to Our Shared Ministry

Pastor Lisa Schrott

Minute for Gratitude

Deacons' Fund

Beth Layhe

Offering

Rebecca Mattern

Invitation

Offertory

Sans Day Carol

John Rutter

***Doxology #606**

***Prayer of Dedication**

Prayers of the People

Sean Clark, Liturgist

The Lord's Prayer

in 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.

Sent Out As a People of God

*** Hymn #100**

My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout, vs. 1-4
[Star of the County Down]

*** Benediction**

Pastor Lisa Schrott

Family of faith, as you leave this place,
you go into a weary world—so speak tenderly.
Do the good that is yours to do.
Choose connection. Hold onto hope.
And remember that Christ took on flesh for you.
You are God's beloved. So go rejoicing.
The world needs it. Amen.

Postlude

Fanfare on Winchester New
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, organist

Charles Callahan

** Please rise in body or spirit*

Education Time: Join us as we reflect on the art of Advent and Christmas. We will practice *visio divina*, sharing how the art speaks into our lives.

Ushers: Ron & Barbara Dorr, Bill & Barbara Given

This Morning's Fellowship Team: Birthday Cake Sunday! Celebrate our December birthdays with a piece of cake in Fellowship Hall after the service. Thank you to Parish Life for supplying the cake and to Edward Ennen and Nancy Kanistanaux for taking care of the coffee.

Wednesday, December 20

7:00 p.m. Longest Night Prayer Service in Kehde Chapel. All are welcome. A special invitation is extended to those who are struggling to find joy this season. The service will include scripture, prayer, music, and candle lighting.

Next Week December 24, 2023

10 am: Fourth Sunday of Advent & Christmas Eve Service, with leadership from children and youth.

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-9, Luke 2: 1-20

Education Hour: There will be no classes for children, youth or adults. Please enjoy an extended time of fellowship with special treats.

8 pm: Candlelight Communion Christmas Eve Service

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2-7, Luke 2:1-20

This morning's liturgy is adapted from words by the Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed. Graphic design by the Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman. A Sanctified Art LLC - *A Weary World Rejoices* sanctifiedart.org.

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Irene Shutt, Handbell Choir Director
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