

The Presbyterian Church of Okemos
December 21, 2025
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Lighting the Candle of Love



Gathering As a People of God

Preparation: “I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. I declare that your steadfast love is established forever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to my servant David: ‘I will establish your descendants forever and build your throne for all generations.’ ” – Psalm 89:1-4

Invitation to Our Shared Ministry

Pastor Lisa Schrott

Prelude

Vom Himmel Hoch
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, organ

Johann Gottfried Walther

*** Call to Worship**

Angie Boldrey, Liturgist

One: We gather together in this place:

All: prophets and dreamers, singers and poets,

One: we who dare to imagine a world renewed;

All: we who dare to dream God’s dream.

One: God’s mercy is upon us all,

All: from generation to generation.

One: Come and worship, all you who dream and wait.

All: We come full of a vigilant hope and the willingness to work for peace.

One: We seek unexpected joys and days full of wonder.

All: Our hearts are full of merciful love!

*** Hymn #111**

From Heaven Above, vs. 1, 2, 4, 5
[Von Himmel Hoch]

Advent Candle Lighting

Claire Mayhew, Anna Meluch, and Emma Roy

Opening Prayer

One: God of love, both ancient and new, you continue to create and animate this world with the tenderness and protection of a loving parent. You did not set the world spinning only to walk away from us. No, you remain faithful to us even when we do not recognize you. The story of Jesus’ birth reminds us that our stories are filled with your faithfulness, your steadfastness, and your patience. But the story is not yet fully written. Even as we struggle through hardships today, the story continues to unfold. Amen.

One: The birth of Jesus has been told and retold a thousand times and in a thousand ways.

All: Its impact cannot be contained in any one perspective. But who is telling the story changes how we hear it, how we imagine it, how we experience it.

One: The story of Jesus' birth reminds us that our stories are filled with your faithfulness, your steadfastness, and your patience. ...
... A love that makes the most difficult of situations bearable and all things seem possible. A love that invites a lifelong, generation-transcending commitment to mercy, justice, and peace.

All: Today, we light the candle of love because love makes the impossible possible.
(The candle of Love is lit.)

Advent Response

We Are a People of Love
[Table of Grace]

Barbara Hamm

The response will be played through once, the congregation will join in the second time.

*We are a people of love;
we are a people of love.
Lighting a candle, we watch for the dawn;
we are a people of love.*

Prayer of Confession

Angie Boldrey, Liturgist

One: Through the holy prophets of old, God gives us knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of our sins. Let us approach the God who loves us, naming our need for redemption.

All: God of love, you teach us songs of praise and call us to proclaim justice. We confess the ways that we instead use our words and voices in ways that cause harm. We share half-truths and speak unkindly. We fail to speak up for the vulnerable. We pay lip service to our faith instead of taking risks in the name of love. Help us to love you and our neighbors with courage and conviction, in word and in deed. We pray in the name of Jesus.
Amen.

Promise of the Gospel and Passing of the Peace

Angie Boldrey, Liturgist

One: God looks upon us with favor and redeems us with mercy. You are forgiven and you are set free, through the saving love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

All: We give thanks to God for everything: forgiveness, hope, new life. Amen.

One: Where two or three of us are gathered, the prophetic Spirit is among us, inspiring our imagination and creating peace in our midst. Greet your fellow travelers now with the peace of Christ, and let these small doses of repair and reconciliation ripple out into a world in need of transformation. 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**

Glory to God
[Gloria, Gloria]

The response will be played through once, the congregation will join in the second time.

*Glory to God, glory to God,
glory in the highest!
Glory to God, glory to God,
alleluia, alleluia!*

Minute for Engagement

Christmas Eve Offering - Deacons Fund

Linda Cravotta

Offering

Pastor Lisa Schrott

Invitation

Offertory

Love Came Down at Christmas
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, organist

arr: Nancy Grundahl

*Doxology #606

*Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of the People

Angie Boldrey, Liturgist

One: Hear our prayers, Lord.

All: May your boundless love make all things whole.

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.

The Word

Prayer of Illumination

Pastor Lisa Schrott

God of whispers and shouts, you proclaim the good news of love from all corners of creation. As we turn to our scriptures, may the words inspire us to dream of a world where love thrives among us. Amen.

The Christmas Story

Pastor Lisa Schrott

As the story is told, you will be invited to be part of the story, to come out of your pew, and join the nativity scene here. That goes for children and adults of all ages. There is room here for you, whatever part you want to play. Come and be a part of this story of God's love.

A Little Child Shall Lead Them

Becca Boldrey, Lizzie Conroy-Krutz, Connor and Evan Haskell, Theo and Isaac Krawczyk, Claire Mayhew, Anna and Ava Meluch, Aria and Reiland Roelofs, Nina and Emma Roy, Isabella Salter

Time of Wonder

Nina Roy, Aria & Reiland Roelofs,
Theo & Isaac Krawczyk, Isabella Salter

Narrator: Connor Haskell

Scripture Lesson

Luke 2:1-7
Mary and Joseph Go to Bethlehem

Aria Roelofs

Special Music

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly
Ali Juenke, soprano
Lizzie Conroy-Krutz, violin
Marlene Brewbaker, organ

Scripture Lesson

Luke 2:8-14
The Angels Appear to the Shepherds

Evan Haskel

*** Hymn #113**

Angels We Have Heard on High, vs. 1-3

Scripture Lesson

Luke 2:15-20
The Shepherds Visit Jesus

Theo Krawczyk

Special Music

Joyful Tidings
Lizzie Conroy-Krutz, violin; Connor Haskel, cello
Evan Haskel, viola; Claire Mayhew, French horn
Anna Meluch, bassoon; Ava Meluch, flute
Hazel Morgan, French horn; Emma Roy, viola; Nina Roy, cello
Sarah Mayhew, Director

Brad Nix

arr. Sarah Mayhew

Scripture Lesson

Matthew 2:1-8 Lizzie Conroy-Krutz & Becca Boldrey
The Wise Ones Come from the East

Hymn #133

O Come, All Ye Faithful, vs. 1-4

Reflection

God's Greatest Gift to Us

Emma Roy

Prayer

Claire Mayhew

*** Affirmation of Love**

Claire Mayhew

One: Let us affirm God's gift of bold and liberating love.

All: We believe in the power of love, a love that not only comforts but liberates. A love constructed with care, compassion, and courage, providing shelter and safety for all God's children.

One: We believe in love's guardrails of grace and mercy. Love does not demand or wait for perfection, but scoops us up in arms of unconditional care, where we are, as we are.

All: We believe, with gratitude, in a legacy of love, a long thread of memory recalling who we are and whose we are, stitching us into its tapestry of belonging.

One: We believe love is not earned. Love is care and connection. Love speaks up. Love makes space. Because God's love doesn't give up on us, we will not give up on ourselves or each other.

All: We will remember and bless. We will fix what is broken. We will look for the dawn of God's love in and around us.

Sent Out As a People of God

*** Hymn #110**

Love Has Come, vs. 1-3
[Bring a Torch]

*** Charge and Benediction**

Pastor Lisa Schrott

To embody love is more than sentiment. It is choosing, every day, to see the worth and good in ourselves, others, and this world. So go forth from this place modeling merciful love, and remember God is love. Though it may be difficult to understand, we see what it means modeled in Jesus. May blessings flow from your mouth as you seek to be love in this world.

Postlude

Fugue on *Noel Nouvelet*
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, organ

* Please rise in body or spirit

Ushers: Brett & Lynette Cone, Deb & Joel Major

Fellowship Team: Thank you to all who brought cookies for our fellowship time, to Tom Schaberg for making coffee and to Gary VanKempen for washing dishes.

Christmas Eve Service Please join us at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 24. The service will include favorite Christmas carols, candlelight and Celebration of the Lord's Supper. The service will be followed by a light reception with cookies and punch.

Our Advent Worship Liturgy *The Will to Dream* is from Illustrated Ministry, 2025.

<https://store.illustratedministry.com/collections/the-will-to-dream>

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Rev. Dr. Lisa Schrott (she/her), Pastor/Head of Staff

Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, Organist

Shelby Laird, Chancel Choir Director

Irene Shutt, Handbell Choir Director

Edward Ennen, Sexton

Anna Thiel, Office Manager

Jacob Meland, Media Specialist

Poinsettia Donations

Michele & Jeff Arbour

In memory of our parents

Sally & Tom Belloli

In celebration of the season

Bob & Cindy Boldrey

In honor of our family

Jim & Julie Boyer

In honor of our family

Marlene Brewbaker

In memory of Chris Doemel

Linda & Lou Cravotta

In celebration of the season

Barbara Fretwell-Cooke

In honor of parents

Jennifer & Gary Gordon

In memory of our parents

Laurie & Jack Harkema

In honor of our parents

Frank & Mary Lou Hatfield

In memory of our parents

Ellen Hoekstra, Dave & Liz

In memory of Doug Hoekstra

Beth Layhe

In memory of Dave and our parents

Steve & Sarah Mayhew

In honor of our parents

Christine & Roy Meland

In memory of our parents

Kathy Richardson

In loving memory of Mark Richardson

Tom & Jill Schaberg

In honor of our parents

Lisa Schrott

***In memory of family and thankfulness for
PCO staff***

Wayne & Barb Scott

In joy of the season

Irene Shutt

***In memory of Paul Shutt, Bill McSwegin,
and parents***

The Stokes Family

***In memory of Richard and Margaret
Stokes***

Gary & Trudy Sturk

***In memory of Dick & Ruth Hoffheins and
Earl & Karolyn Sturk***

Trena Thornburg & Family

In memory of John Thornburg

Sky & Jill Tribell

In honor of our parents