



PREPARE
the way of
THE LORD

New Covenant Presbyterian Church
December 13, 2020 10:00am Service



1125 Jamison Corner Road Middletown, DE
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The Worship of God

3rd Sunday of Advent

Welcome, Announcements and Sharing of Our Vision

Lay Leader: Donna Casey

Preparing to Meet God

Preparing Ourselves for Worship During the Prelude...

While so much of our Christmas preparation is geared toward giving gifts to people – at least, what we think they want or need – John the Baptist proclaims a Messiah who will not fit in any of our boxes. He is the gift for which no one knows how to ask, the gift no one expects - the gift so different from the one we had in mind, that plenty of us will not even recognize him when he comes. And yet, there was a reason that God sent such a servant to Prepare the Way of the Lord. He came to testify to the Light and Love that had been born on earth yet was from heaven. His was a Voice crying out in the Wilderness – Make straight the Way of the Lord. And the way he described this Messiah was like no other, and so all who heard his message knew that someone special – someone great – someone who was heaven-sent was about to arrive. May we prepare ourselves for just such a One.

Advent Call to Worship

Advent Wreath Lighters: Donna & James Casey

L: The third candle is the candle of JOY. We are told that the magi, when they saw the star over the place where Jesus was, “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.”

P: *May the light of Christ bring us this kind of joy.*

L: This candle symbolizes the joy Christ’s light brings us.

P: *The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing... They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. (The 3rd candle is lit.)*

L: Let us pray. O God, turn our days to joy, that we may serve you always. Fill us with a sense of expectancy and wonder, as we continue to prepare for the amazing blessings of Christ’s holy birth. Amen.



Advent Response

He Came Down

*He came down that we may have joy. He came down that we may have joy,
He came down that we may have joy. Hallelujah forevermore.*

*Hymn of Praise

I Love to Tell the Story

*I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true; it satisfies my longings as nothing else could do.*

***Refrain: I love to tell the story; 'twill be my them in glory,
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.***

*I love to tell the story, 'tis pleasant to repeat, what seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet!
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard the message of salvation from God's own holy Word.*

Refrain

*I love to tell the story, for those who know it best, seem hungering and thirsting to hear it, like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song, 'twill be the old, old story
that I have loved so long.*

Refrain

Witness to Joy

L: Instead of a typical Confession of Sin, today let us try something that may be equally challenging in light of the difficult year we have spent. Let us witness instead to signs of JOY in our midst – signs that our God is doing something new, and calling us to faithfulness in our contexts. What are signs of HOPE, of ENCOURAGEMENT, of CHANGE, of COMFORT that point to the work of the Spirit in your life and in the world? Perhaps these signs of the Spirit at work are calling us to join in or amplify the presence of God in our community. (Encourage people to share their experience of the Spirit.)

Response to each Shared Sign of Joy in the world: Praise God!

Assurance of Forgiveness

L: Holy One, we give thanks that you meet us in our struggles, and call us into a future of hope and joy. You have promised to be faithful, and we open our hearts to you in trust, in the name of your forgiving Son.

P: **Praise the Lord, Amen.**



Meeting God in the Word

Children's Message

Prayer for Illumination

First Lesson

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11

The Good News of Deliverance

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion - to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Special Music

Bethlehem Wind

Joseph M. Martin



*Blow, Blow, Bethlehem wind, over the hills and the valleys.
Blow, blow, Bethlehem wind, God's promise of love and salvation.
Blow, blow, Spirit of Truth, carry the news of a Savior.
Blow, blow, Spirit of God, preparing the world for God's Son.*

*Blow, blow, Bethlehem wind, carry the song of the angels.
Blow, blow, Bethlehem wind, move through the hearts of the nations.
Blow, blow, Spirit of Hope, scatter the leaves of our sorrow,
Blow, blow, Spirit of God, warm the whole world with your love.*

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

Second Lesson John 1: 6-8, 19-28

The Testimony of John the Baptist

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, 'I am not the Messiah.' And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' He answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'

He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord" ', as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, 'Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?' John answered them, 'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.' This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Sermon

Waiting in the Dark

Responding to the Word

*Hymn

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence, vs. 1,2&4

*Let all mortal flesh keep silence, and with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded, for with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth, our full homage to demand.*

*King of kings, yet born of Mary, as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture, in the body and the blood,
He will give to all the faithful his own self for heavenly food.*

*At his feet the six-winged seraph, cherubim, with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence, as with ceaseless voice they cry,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, Lord most high!*

*Litany of Faith

L: When the Anointed One comes, what shall we see?

P: *The broken-hearted being consoled and the captives going free.*

A: *Open our eyes, that we may experience and welcome the presence of the Lord!*

L: When the Anointed One comes, what shall we hear?

P: *The afflicted being lifted up and mourners made glad.*

A: *Open our ears, that we may hear the joy of experiencing the presence of the Lord.*

L: When the Anointed One comes, what shall we feel?

P: *The oppressed being delivered and prisoners released.*

A: *Open our hearts, that we may feel the warmth of the presence of the Lord!*

L: When the Anointed One comes, what shall we say?

P: *The just are being vindicated and prophets made welcome.*

A: *Open our mouths, that we may shout words of joy over the presence of the Lord!*

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Cares Chorus:

*I cast all my cares upon you. I lay all of my burdens down
at your feet. And anytime I don't know what to do,
I cast all my cares upon you.*

The Call to Celebrate Our Gifts

The Invitation *You are invited to place your regular offerings in the basket in the back of the sanctuary, or mail them in. In both struggles and in joy, God is faithful to us. And so, we bring forth our offerings to demonstrate our faithfulness to our God. Let us pray.*

Prayer of Dedication *O faithful One, accept these gifts of our hearts and hands. May they be multiplied and magnified as the living presence of Christ in the world. Amen.*

Going Out to Serve God

* Hymn

While We Are Waiting, Come

*While we are waiting, come; while we are waiting, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.*

*With power and glory, come; with power and glory, come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.*

*Come, Savior, quickly come; come, Savior, quickly come.
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.*



*Pause your pace
to create space
to prepare your heart
for the coming
of the Christ-Child*

*** Blessing**

L: Go forth with confidence that God is faithful -

P: *That those who have sowed in sorrow, will return with shouts of joy.*

L: Bearing the harvest of God's work,

P: *May we rejoice always for the Lord is near.*

L: And may the blessings of God...

***Response**

He Is Lord

He is Lord, He is Lord!

He is risen from the dead and he is Lord!

Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess,

That Jesus Christ is Lord.

