



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FENTON

To be a loving community of faith dedicated to helping people know
Jesus Christ and grow, share and serve as his disciples.

4th Sunday of Advent

December 18, 2022 10:00 AM

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GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

PRELUDE “The Joy of Christmas” Chancel Choir

WELCOME

INTROIT “Birthday in a Manger” Chancel Choir

CALL TO WORSHIP Psalm 80

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth **2** before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your might, and come to save us!

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people’s prayers?

You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure.

You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

What is God like?

God is like a river, constant and life-giving. When you grow near God, you’ll sprout up strong as a tree. Our God is like a refreshing, peaceful river. Today we light four Advent candles: the candle of hope, the candle of peace, the candle of joy, and the candle of love.

Our souls proclaim your greatness, O God.

And our spirits rejoice in you.

We will praise you as long as we live.

We will sing praises to you our whole lives long.

We will not trust in the powerful of this world,

but will trust in you—Creator of heaven and earth,

the One who gives food to the hungry,

the One who enacts justice for the oppressed.

Our souls proclaim your greatness, O God,

as we worship you in this place.

HYMN “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

CALL TO CONFESSION: Isaiah 43:1-3

Hear these words from the prophet Isaiah:

But now thus says the Lord who created you, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the water, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flames shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (In Unison)

Triune God, we are here on the cusp of Christmas celebrations, and we acknowledge that too often our understanding of the incarnation is tame and controlled. Because you chose to come to earth as a helpless child, it is easy to assume we can be in charge of your world, your mission, your purposes.

Forgive us for seeking to control you. Forgive us for taming the wild and wonderful grace of the Holy Spirit. Forgive us for seeing your power as our prerogative.

Give us trust so we can turn to you with humble hearts and believe that your loving purposes are much deeper and more comprehensive than our own could ever be. Amen.

DECLARATION OF PARDON:

The Lord shows us grace. The Lord overflows in steadfast love.

Even our mistakes do not separate us from God’s love, but give us an opportunity to know that God is forgiving.

Children of God, you are forgiven. Be at peace.

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Faithful God, you chose Mary, full of grace, to be the mother of our Sovereign and Savior, Jesus Christ. Now fill us with your grace, that with her, we may also understand your ways, rejoice in your salvation, and embrace your will; through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Habakkuk 1:2-4; 3:17-19

1:2 O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen?

Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?

3 Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble?

Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

4 So the law becomes slack, and justice never prevails.

The wicked surround the righteous; therefore judgment comes forth perverted.

3:17 Though the fig tree does not blossom and no fruit is on the vines;

though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food;

though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls,

18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation.

19 God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer and makes me tread upon the heights.

ANTHEM “Tapestry of Carols” Chancel Choir

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: Matthew 2:1-12

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, **2** asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage.” **3** When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, **4** and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. **5** They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’ ”

7 Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. **8** Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” **9** When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10** When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. **11** On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. **12** And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

SERMON Presents or Presence

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

A MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

How do you best receive love?
When has God loved you in that way?

BEARING THE WORD OUT INTO THE WORLD

OFFERING

We lay our gifts down at the foot of God’s great gifts to us. The manger, the cross and the resurrection all make our gifts look like soiled rags. Yet, in God’s hands our offerings can be transformed into kingdom work and God glorifying goodness. Let us pray together...

(If you would like a written prayer request included in our prayers today, please indicate that and an usher will collect them)

(Financial Offerings can also be placed in dropbox located in the New Narthex)

