



## 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.

1st Sunday of Advent Communion  
December 1st, 2024 10:00 a.m.

GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

PRELUDE

WELCOME

INTROIT The Glory of the Lord Shall be Revealed Hopson

CALL TO WORSHIP

God says,

**“Do not be afraid.”**

God says,

**“I have called you by name.”**

God says,

**“I will be with you.”**

God says,

**“You are precious and honored in my sight.”**

At the beginning of this season,

**at the start of this week,**

at the top of this hour,

**may we wrap ourselves in these words.**

**May we begin again.**

Let us worship our Holy God!

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

A: In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start?

B: *Let us begin with the good news!*

*Let us begin by trusting that we are a blessing, loved by a gracious God.*

*Let us begin with music and singing!*

*Let us begin with warmth and welcome.*

*Let us begin with hope.*

A: Yes, let us begin with hope.

B: *Today we light the candle of hope to shine a light in a worn and weary world.*

*(The Candle is lit)*

*May this be our foundation.*

*May this be our fresh start.*

*May this be our new beginning.*

A: May hope flow forth from here. Amen

**HYMN PH #129** “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”

### PROCLAIMING THE WORD

#### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Affirming God,

How often do you speak to us, and how often do we miss it?

How often do you whisper blessings over us that we refuse to hear?

Open our hearts.

Create space in us to not only hear these words,  
but to believe the good news tucked between them.

We are hungry for your wisdom,  
so speak to us now.

With hope and curiosity,  
we listen.

With hope and curiosity,  
we dare to begin again.

Amen.

#### **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON** Isaiah 43:1-7

Restoration and Protection Promised

43 But now thus says the LORD,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name; you are mine.

2 When you pass through the waters, 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 flame shall not consume you.

3 For I am the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

I give Egypt as your ransom,  
Cush and Seba in exchange for you.

- 4 Because you are precious in my sight  
and honored and I love you,  
I give people in return for you,  
nations in exchange for your life.
- 5 Do not fear, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
and from the west I will gather you;
- 6 I will say to the north, “Give them up,”  
and to the south, “Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from far away  
and my daughters from the end of the earth—
- 7 everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.”

**ANTHEM** Lord of the Dance

Kerry Lewis’ Highland Dancers

**NEW TESTAMENT LESSON** Luke 1:26-32

### **The Birth of Jesus Foretold**

**26** In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, **27** to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. **28** And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” **29** But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. **30** The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

**SERMON** You Are A Blessing

### RESPONDING TO THE WORD

#### **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We believe in a blessing God  
who calls us Beloved.

We believe that this blessing showed up in the life of Mary,  
and was also bestowed upon the hemorrhaging woman,

the poor in spirit,  
 the children,  
 the crowds,  
 the Jews,  
 the Gentiles,  
 the faithful and the doubting.  
 So in faith,  
 we trust that God's blessing,  
 like ripples on the water,  
 forever reaches toward us.  
 And with wild hope,  
 we believe  
 that because of this blessing,  
 we are covered in love.  
 We are more than enough.  
 Thanks be to God!  
 Amen.

### **OFFERING**

*(If you would like a written prayer request included in our prayers today, please indicate that and an usher will collect them)*  
*Will the Ushers please come forward.*

### **DOXOLOGY**

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below;  
 Praise God above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

### **INVITATION TO THE TABLE**

Friends, Advent is a season of waiting.  
 We wait for Christ to be born.  
 We wait for the feeling that love is near.  
 We wait for God's promised day.  
 Advent is a season of waiting.  
 And while we humans are good at many things, waiting is not high on that list.  
 We are an impatient and anxious bunch, eager for the hope of what comes next.  
 Maybe that's why this Table is such a gift.  
 For when we come to this Table, for just a moment, the waiting stops.  
 When we come to this Table, for just a moment, we get a glimpse of God's  
 promised day.

We get a glimpse of a world where all are fed and all are welcomed.  
 And for just a moment we can believe the angels when they say,  
 “Be not afraid.”

For just a moment, Mary’s words tumble through our minds—  
 words of justice and hope, words like, “the hungry have been filled” and “the  
 humble have been lifted.”

So come to this Table.

Come catch a glimpse of what could be.

Come end your waiting, for love is hovering close.

This is what it’s all about.

God is all around us.

So come. This good news is for you.

All are welcome here.

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God of blessings,

Once again, we find ourselves standing at the beginning of the month,

at the beginning of this Advent season,

at the beginning of this new day,

bringing our hearts to you.

Meet us here, gracious God.

Hear our prayers and offer your words of blessing.

To start, we bring you prayers of deep gratitude.

First, we want to say thank you for the the people who, like the angel Gabriel, help  
 us see you in

our midst. Thank you for faith mentors, for friends that greet us with hugs and  
 smiles at church,

for the saints who have gone before us, for Sunday school teachers and youth  
 advisors. Thank you for these saints and the ways they always point us toward you.

Pour out your blessings on them.

Similarly, we give you thanks for the people who, like Mary, have shown us what it  
 looks like to trust our belovedness. Thank you for the folks in our lives who have  
 acted with fierce bravery,

trusting their call and your words of blessing. Their faith and conviction inspires  
 our own.

In addition to prayers of gratitude, we also offer prayers for guidance.

For even though we count this day as a new beginning, the words and messages of  
 the past cling to us like quicksand.

Blessing God, today we lift up those of us who have ever been told that we are unworthy or are not enough by this demanding society.

We pray for those of us who have ever been discouraged from chasing a dream or have been made to feel small.

We pray for those of us who know insecurity and dance with self-doubt.

We pray for all who hear your words of blessing and want to respond, “How can this be?”

Let this day be a new beginning, Creator God.

Erase our memories of self-doubt.

Erase the “How can this be?” questions from our minds.

Erase our insecurities and fears,  
and in their place, fill our hearts with trust.

Fill our spirits with conviction.

Fill our minds with the knowledge that, like Mary, we are made in your image.

Like Mary, we are good.

God of blessings,

Once again, we find ourselves standing at the beginning of the month,

at the beginning of this Advent season,

at the beginning of this new day,

bringing our hearts to you.

So on this new day, we pray: speak your words of blessing once again.

And as you do, we will lift our voices together to pray the words your son taught us to pray, saying. . .

### **LORD’S PRAYER**

*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. men.*

### **CALL TO CONFESSION**

In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel tells Mary two things: that she is highly favored, and that she is going to have a child.

Mary’s response to this news is simple. With awestruck authenticity, she asks, “How can this be?”

Everytime we approach the prayer of confession, I ask myself this same awestruck question, “How can this be?” How can God’s mercy know no end? How can God be so gracious with someone as fickle as me?

Regardless of the week we've had, this good news never changes. So join me in speaking the truth of our lives. Join me in the prayer of confession, and may God's mercy leave you awestruck.

Let us pray:

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION** (In Unison)

**Affirming God,**

**Your first words to creation were words of love.**

**You looked at this earth and said, "It is good."**

**You spoke affirmations through the prophets.**

**You spoke blessings over Mary.**

**You spoke belonging through Christ.**

**At every turn, you have reiterated that we are a blessing,  
made in your image, held in your love.**

**Forgive us for forgetting this truth.**

**Forgive us for measuring our worth by society's measuring stick  
instead of yours.**

**We believe.**

**Help our unbelief.**

**In Christ's name we pray,**

**Amen.**

**DECLARATION OF PARDON:**

Family of faith,

I don't know the last time someone told you that you are good, just as you are.

I don't know the last time you heard that you are loved and created in the image of God.

I don't know the last time you trusted those words and truly believed that you are a blessing.

However, in case it has been a while, hear these words from Isaiah:

God says,

**"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.**

**I have called you by name.**

**You are mine."**

We are forgiven. We are loved. Let it leave you awestruck.

**Thanks be to God! May we believe it. Amen.**

## COMMUNION

### PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Loving God,

We come to this Table today longing for a new beginning.

In a world that so often feels like it's ending,  
we crave the hope of a new beginning.

We long to heal from the endings and crash landings of our hurting world and  
start again,

rooted in your good news.

So week by week, bit by bit, we return to your Word.

Week by week, bit by bit, we return to each other.

Week by week, and bit by bit, we repeat the truths that we so often need to  
hear, trusting that

by your grace, it is never too late to start again.

So in this spirit of beginnings, we come to your Table.

Once more we ask that you would meet us here.

Pour out your Spirit on this ordinary meal, that in this bread and cup we may  
glimpse a new day.

May the sight of everyone being welcomed at this Table  
remind us that all are loved by you.

May the evidence that there is food for all  
remind us that no one is meant to go hungry.

May the fact that our own sin, shame, and doubt do not keep us from this  
Table remind us

that you welcome and love us as we are.

And may all of these Communion truths serve as building blocks for a new  
day, for a new

beginning.

With hope in our hearts, we pray.

With hope in our hearts, we gather.

With hope in our hearts, we begin again.

Meet us here.

Allow this joyful feast to be the start of something new.

With joy and hope, we weave our voices together  
to pray the words your son taught us to pray, saying . . .

Offer the Lord's Prayer in your preferred language.

### WORDS OF INSTITUTION



## SHARING THE FEAST

### COMMUNION PRAYER:

Nourishing God,  
 Sometimes we tell ourselves that too much has taken place to begin again.  
 We think the world is too far gone.  
 We think we have made too many mistakes.  
 We tell ourselves that we couldn't possibly begin again.  
 But then we come to this Table and we get a glimpse of your kingdom.  
 We come to this Table and all are welcomed, all are seen, all are fed.  
 And just like that, we have hope.  
 Just like that, we begin again.  
 Thank you for the gift of this fresh start.  
 Thank you for planting hope deep in our bones.  
 Thank you for meeting us in ordinary bread and juice to remind us that it's  
 never too late to  
 build your kingdom here.  
 We are grateful.  
 We are so grateful. Amen.

## BEARING THE WORD OUT INTO THE WORLD

### TABLETALK WITH GOD'S CHILDREN

**HYMN PH #88 BH #9** "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

**CHARGE** —from A Brief Statement of Faith

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, let us strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth, praying: Come, Lord Jesus!

**BENEDICTION** Rejoice Emmanuel Shall Come

### POSTLUDE

**May the Peace of Christ be with you...**  
**...And also with you!**