



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.

2nd Sunday of Advent
December 8th, 2024 10:00 a.m.

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GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

PRELUDE “Like Bridge over Troubled Waters” Simon and Garfunkel

WELCOME

INTROIT The Glory of the Lord Shall be Revealed Hopson

CALL TO WORSHIP

In a world that is lonely,

we will save a seat for you.

In a world that is anxious,

we will light candles against the gloom.

In a world that is weary,

we will sing songs of joy and truth.

I am not alone.

We are not alone.

For here in this place, God is weaving us together.

Light the candles! Sing with joy!

We are a three-cord strand, not easily broken.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

One: In a weary and worn world,

how do we begin again?

Where do we start?

All: Let us begin together.

Let us begin arm in arm.

**Let us begin by holding each other up,
instead of tearing each other down.**

Let us begin with words of peace.

One: Yes, let us begin with peace. Today we

light the candles of hope and peace. (The Candles are lit)

All: May these lights remind us of what could be.

May these lights mark a new beginning. May peace flow like a river, and may it start with us.

One: Arm in arm, hand in hand, side by side.
May we begin again. Amen.

HYMN PH #106 BH #13 “Prepare the Way, O Zion”

CALL TO CONFESSION

Family of faith, one of the beautiful things about the prayer of confession is it is often a prayer we say together.

There are times when we close our eyes, bow our heads, and exchange private words with our Creator.

But there are other times when praying out loud as a community allows us to right our relationship with God and with one another as well.

This is one of those moments.

So as a community, please join me in our call and response prayer of confession.

Join me in speaking the truth of our lives.

Join me in practicing grace.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (In Unison)

I have tried to make my own way.

I have tried to lace my own shoes, to build my own house, to kindle my own faith.

I have said a thousand times, “turn back,” as if I am fine on my own.

But the days are long and I am forgetful.

I need your help. Can you remind me?

We will remind you of this everlasting truth:

You are not alone.

Where you go, God goes.

You are held in grace.

Trust in this good news.

Thanks be to God! I remember. I believe.

Now we need your help.

We, too, have tried to make our own way.

We have tried to lace our own shoes, to build our own houses, to kindle our own faiths.

We have said a thousand times, “turn back,” as if we are fine on our own.

**But the days are long and we are forgetful.
We need your help. Can you remind us?**

DECLARATION OF PARDON

I will remind you of this everlasting truth:

You are not alone.

Where you go, God goes.

You are held in grace.

Trust in this good news.

Thanks be to God! We remember. We believe.

Alleluia! Amen.

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God,

The words of this world whip around us like a mighty wind.

We are caught up in news reports,

in text messages,

in emails and notifications.

We are drowning in updates from the media,

caught off guard by the constant hum of it all.

But here on this bright morning we remember:

you too are speaking.

Still the voices around us.

Calm our minds and center our hearts

so that we can hear your words above the wind.

We are leaning closer.

We are at the edge of our chairs.

We are beginning again.

Speak to us, as only you can. Amen.

FIRST LESSON: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

pg. 616

The Value of a Friend

9 Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up the other, but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how

can one keep warm alone? 12 And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

ANTHEM In the Bleak MidWinter

SECOND LESSON: Ruth 1

Pg. 241

Elimelech's Family Goes to Moab

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. 2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. 3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Naomi and Her Moabite Daughters-in-Law

6 Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had considered his people and given them food. 7 So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. 8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. 10 They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? 12 Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, 13 would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against

me.” 14 Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

15 So she said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” 16 But Ruth said,

“Do not press me to leave you,
to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people
and your God my God.

17 Where you die, I will die,
and there will I be buried.
May the LORD do thus to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!”

18 When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

19 So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women said, “Is this Naomi?” 20 She said to them,

“Call me no longer Naomi;
call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.

21 I went away full,
but the LORD has brought me back empty;
why call me Naomi
when the LORD has dealt harshly with me
and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?”

22 So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

SERMON

We Can't Go Alone

Pastor Robbie Carnes

RESPONDING TO THE WORD**AFFIRMATION OF FAITH****We believe in a with-us God:****a God who walks with us in the valley,
dances with us on the mountaintop,
sings with us through the night
and rejoices in the morning.****We believe that this with-us God
wired us for relationship,
saying to creation on the very first week,
“Humans should not be alone.”****Therefore, in an effort to be who God called us to be,
we strive to live like the Trinity—
connected, united, and centered.****We believe in the power of community.****We commit to learning each other's names.****We choose to journey with each other,
like Ruth with Naomi.****And we remember that no one can go through life alone.****Thanks be to God, for lighting our way.****HYMN PH #684**

“Faith Begins by Letting Go”

BEARING THE WORD OUT INTO THE WORLD**OFFERING**

With thankfulness we give in gratitude and joy. With prayerfulness we give in sacrifice and love. With hopefulness we give in commitment to God

Let us pray:

Praise be to you, O LORD,

God of our father Israel,

from everlasting to everlasting.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power, and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things.

In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.
Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. Amen.

(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.

OFFERTORY

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.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Relational God,

There are certain truths we know about ourselves.

We know that we will make mistakes.

We know that we need you.

We know that some days are beautiful and some days are terrible.

And we know that we cannot go through life alone.

Like flowers need the sun,

We humans need relationships.

We need you.

We need this community.

So on this Sunday morning, we give you thanks for the connections we do have.

Thank you for the friends who know us.

Thank you for the families who claim us.

Thank you for the church who welcomes us.

Thank you for the neighbors who remember us.

Thank you for the mentors who believed in us,
and for the saints who taught us.

Like Naomi needed Ruth,

or Mary needed Joseph,

we know that we cannot make the long journey to Bethlehem alone.

So for all who walk alongside us,

we give you thanks.

However, at the same time,

we also know that more than ever,
we live in a lonely world.

The US General Surgeon has declared loneliness an epidemic.

So today, as we remember our human need for connection, we also lift up every person who has ever felt disconnected.

We pray for anyone who has ever felt invisible in a crowded room.

We pray for those who put their heart on their sleeve, extend the invite, and still find themselves eating alone.

We pray for those who feel distanced from their family, by choice or circumstance.

We pray for those who doubt their worthiness, allowing self narratives to get in the way of meaningful connection.

We all long to have a Ruth in our lives. So for those of us still looking for people with loyalty like Ruth, draw near.

Remind us that with you, we are never truly alone.

With you, we are seen.

We are loved.

We are known.

We are celebrated.

Where we go, you go.

What greater love is there than that?

And so, with grateful hearts, let us practice connection by joining our voices together in

prayer, saying the words your son taught us to pray. . .

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. Amen.

TABLETALK WITH GOD'S CHILDREN

BAPTISM**HYMN BH #132 BH #28** “Good Christian Friends Rejoice”**CHARGE**—Mark 13:33-37, NIV

Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back— whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: “Watch!”

BENEDICTION “O Come O Come Emmanuel”**POSTLUDE**

Peace be with you!...and also with you!