THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 17, 2023
11:00 AM

As a courtesy to others, please silence your phone.

GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

RINGING OF THE BELLS

WELCOME AND INVITATION Rev. Timothy T. Boggess

PRELUDE *Silent Night, Holy Night* arr. Hal H. Hopson
(Handbell Choir)

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES Don & Ann Opdycke

When God's people were surrounded by hardship, suffering, and grief,
Isaiah proclaimed,

Isaiah 61:1-3a

"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 brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

We come today as people
who are also surrounded by suffering and grief.
And yet, the Spirit hovers among us,
tending and anointing, inspiring freedom
where there is captivity, declaring blessing
in places the world has cursed,
and igniting fierce joy where
mourning and heartache prevail.

**We wait as people who experience hardship and pain,
yet we are called to witness to the persistent joy
that sustains our life as God's people.**

We light these candles as signs of
our shocking hope, just peace, and fierce joy.
May our lives shine with the fierce, tenacious joy
of the Light who lives in our hearts as we wait
and work for the coming of God's kin-dom
on earth as it is in heaven. **Amen.**

***HYMN 106** *Prepare the Way, O Zion* BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN

Prepare the way, O Zion,
your Christ is drawing near!
Let every hill and valley
a level way appear.
Greet One who comes in glory,
foretold in sacred story. *(continued next page)*

* Please rise in body or in spirit.

Refrain:
O blest is Christ who came
in God's most holy name.

He brings God's rule, O Zion;
he comes from heaven above.
His rule is peace and freedom,
and justice, truth, and love.
Lift high your praise resounding,
for grace and joy abounding.
O blest is Christ who came
in God's most holy name.

Fling wide your gates, O Zion;
your Savior's rule embrace,
and tidings of salvation
proclaim in every place.
All lands will bow rejoicing,
their adoration voicing.
O blest is Christ who came
in God's most holy name.

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Faithful God,
we know that you are always there to guide us,
yet we often make plans without listening to you
and discover that our agendas can drown out
our ability to hear your will for us.
We repent of these faults and turn to you in love.
Forgive our shortcomings, strengthen our spirits,
and guide our steps so that we might follow
in the way of Jesus Christ.

(a moment for silent reflection)

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

***SONG OF JOY 583** *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* TAIZE

Gloria, gloria in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, gloria! Alleluia, alleluia!

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

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
And also with you.

LIFE OF THE CHURCH

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

ANTHEM *Il est Né, le Divin Enfant* French Carol
(Chancel Choir) arr. Burrows

Refrain
Il est né le divin enfant,
play on the flute and the bagpipes merrily.
Il est né le divin enfant,
sing our song for the little child.

Through long ages of the past,
prophets have foretold his coming.
Through long ages of the past,
now the time has come at last. (Refrain)

Child of wonder, child so small,
for his bed a lowly manger.
Child of wonder, child so small,
born this day for one and all. (Refrain)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

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SCRIPTURE READING Luke 1:1-38

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

SERMON *Can You Hear Me Now?* Rev. Boggess

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

A Declaration of Faith (1977)

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

In Christ God gave us a glimpse of the new creation
he has already begun and will surely finish.
We do not know when the final day will come.
In our time we see only broken and scattered signs
that the renewal of all things is under way.
We do not yet see the end of cruelty and suffering
in the world, the church, or our own lives.
But we see Jesus as Lord.
As he stands at the center of our history,
we are confident he will stand at its end.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE 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.

OFFERING OUR GIFTS TO GOD

OFFERTORY *Adeste Fideles* arr. Cynthia Dobrinski
(Handbell Choir)

***DOXOLOGY 607** *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow* OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise Christ, all people here below;
praise Holy Spirit evermore;
praise Triune God, whom we adore.

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

BEARING THE WORD INTO THE WORLD

***HYMN 96** *On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry* WINCHESTER NEW

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
announces that the Lord is nigh;
awake and hearken, for he brings
glad tidings of the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every life from sin;
make straight the way for God within,
and let us all our hearts prepare
for Christ to come and enter there.

We hail you as our Savior, Lord,
our refuge and our great reward;
without your grace we waste away
like flowers that wither and decay.

Stretch forth your hand; our health restore,
and make us rise to fall no more.
O let your face upon us shine
and fill the world with love divine.

***CHARGE AND BENEDICTION** Rev. Boggess

POSTLUDE *The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy* arr. Jeffrey Honoré
(Handbell Choir)

The postlude concludes our worship today. It's the custom of this congregation to sit and enter into this moment with gratitude and celebration.

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