First Presbyterian and Westminster Presbyterian Churches

Wooster, Ohio



First Sunday of Christmas

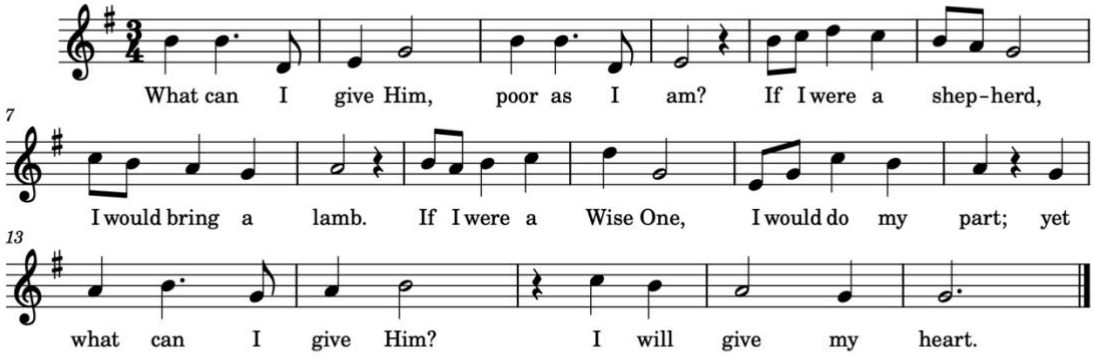
December 31, 2023 10:15 a.m.

Welcome

Prelude *Austrian, Appalachian, and Afro-American Carols* *arr. Charles Callahan*
Eric J. Gastier, organ

Becoming Present – The Ritual of Light Reverend Dr. Enikö Ferenczy and Reverend David Rice

The overwhelming message of the Christmas story is the assurance that we, too, are children of the Holy One. In this, our very presence is a gift if we will only allow the Spirit to move in and through us. Every day of our ordinary lives, we can show up — be present — and proclaim the assurance of hope, peace, joy, and love to those who need it most.



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Reader: We come giving thanks that the gifts we've been given
are the gifts we can give.
People: We open our hearts, readying them for the gift of a new year!

Reader: The promises of Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Light
are the Divine Gifts we receive.
**People: We will use them to reassure those who need to know
that they are the recipients of these gifts as well.**

(all the candles on the wreath are lit)

Reader: The gift of hope is an essential survival tool
because it reminds us that the hard times do not have the last word.

The gift of Christ's peace reminds us that we can have peace
even in the midst of non-peaceful situations.

The gift of joy is not the equivalent of happiness,
but rather the deep call to delight in the small things.

The gift of love is the clarion call to us as Jesus' disciples.
The more love we put into the world, the better the world will be.

The gift of Christ's light is the reassurance that we are never alone.

People: We light these candles as a sign that we will be
Present with Assurance in the world.

(The congregation joins into song.)

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise [One], I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.

PRAYER OF PRESENCE

Holy Living Light of God,
you are our Reassuring Presence.
Let this assurance grow in our lives each day,
so we can be a Present of Assurance to others.
Unwrap and open our hearts.
May it be so.
Amen

*HYMN 133 ***O Come, All Ye Faithful*** *ADESTE FIDELES*

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION Rev. Dr. Ferenczy

FIRST READING Isaiah 62 :1-3 (*Inclusive Language Translation*) Rev. Rice

For Zion's sake, I will not be silent;
for the sake of Jerusalem, I will not rest —
not until her integrity shines like the dawn,
her deliverance like a flaming torch.
The nations will see your vindication, and the rulers your splendor;
you will have a new name that God's mouth will bestow.
You will be a garland of beauty in God's hands,
a solemn crown worn by your God.

GOSPEL READING Luke 2:21-38 (*CEB*)

21 When eight days had passed, Jesus' parents circumcised him and gave him the name Jesus. This was the name given to him by the angel before he was conceived. **22** When the time came for their ritual cleansing, in accordance with the Law from Moses, they brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (**23** It's written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male will be dedicated to the Lord.") **24** They offered a sacrifice in keeping with what's stated in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

25 A man named Simeon was in Jerusalem. He was righteous and devout. He eagerly anticipated the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. **26** The Holy Spirit revealed to him that he wouldn't die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. **27** Led by the Spirit, he went into the temple area. Meanwhile, Jesus' parents brought the child to the temple so that they could do what was customary under the Law. **28** Simeon took Jesus in his arms and praised God. He said,
29 "Now, master, let your servant go in peace according to your word,
30 because my eyes have seen your salvation.
31 You prepared this salvation in the presence of all peoples.
32 It's a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and a glory for your people Israel."

33 His father and mother were amazed by what was said about him.**34** Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "This boy is assigned to be the cause of the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that generates opposition **35** so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your innermost being too."

36 There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, who belonged to the tribe of Asher. She was very old. After she married, she lived with her husband for seven years. **37** She was now an 84-year-old widow. She never left the temple area but worshipped God with fasting and prayer night and day. **38** She approached at that very moment and began to praise God and to speak about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

REFLECTION – BEING PRESENT WITH ASSURANCE Rev. Dr. Ferenczy

*HYMN 127 ***Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*** *WE'LL WALK IN THE LIGHT*

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our God in heaven, holy is your name.
Your kin-dom come,
Your will be done, on earth as is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kin-dom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen

*HYMN 134 ***Joy to the World*** *ANTIOCH*

*BLESSING AND BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Chant du Roi René: Noel Provençal* *F. Alexandre Guilmant*

* Asterisk indicates places in the service to stand.

First Presbyterian Church is a Christian community dedicated to showing God's love through worship, study, social justice, outreach, and fellowship.

Westminster strives to be an "Intentionally Inclusive" community of believers and seekers, following the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Through worship, study, and acts of compassion aimed at peacemaking, we seek to bring about God's kin-dom in how we express our faith.

More Light Church and Member of Covenant Network
Earth Care Congregation and Matthew 25 Church

The Mission of More Light Presbyterians: Following the risen Christ, and seeking to make the Church a true community of hospitality, the mission of More Light Presbyterians is to work for the full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people in the life, ministry, and witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and in society.

The Mission of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians is to strengthen the church of Jesus Christ, with the help of God's grace. We are called to achieve this goal by furthering the inclusion of LGBTQ persons, and by working for the unity of the PC(USA).

Earth Care Pledge: Peace and justice is God's plan for all creation. The earth and all creation are God's. God calls us to be careful, humble stewards of this earth, and to protect and restore it for its own sake, and for the future use and enjoyment of the human family. As God offers all people the special gift of peace through Jesus Christ, and through Christ reconciles all to God we are called to deal justly with one another and the earth.

The Mission of the Matthew 25 Church: Matthew 25:31–46 calls us to actively engage the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. We commit ourselves to congregational vitality by acting boldly and compassionately to end systemic poverty and structural racism, serving people who are oppressed, imprisoned, poor.

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