FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF BETHLEHEM

Traditional Worship
The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024

The Service for the Lord's Day

WE GATHER

PRELUDE In Dulci Jubilo arr. Carl Bloom

WELCOME

*ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING Evelyn Kuserk, Jeanette Claessens, Aileen Willliams

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

All: Let us begin with tenderness. Let us begin with our hearts on our sleeve. Let us begin from a place of vulnerability and hope. Let us begin with love.

One: Yes, let us start with love. Today we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.

All: May the warmth of these lights be our cornerstone. May the truth in these lights help us begin again.

One: May it be so! Amen.

*ADVENT WREATH LIGHTING RESPONSE #3

Comfort, Comfort You My People (Verse 1) PSALM 42

1 Comfort, comfort you my people,
Tell of peace, thus saith our God;
Comfort those who sit in darkness
Bowed beneath oppression's load.

Speak ye to Jerusalem
Of the peace that waits for them;
Tell them that their sins I cover,
And their warfare now is over.

*Please stand if you are able

*GATHERING HYMN #12

People, Look East. The Time is Near BESANCONS

1 People look east the time is near
Of the crowning of the year
Make your house fair as you are able
Trim the hearth and set the table
People look east and sing today
Love - The guest - Is on the way

2 Furrows be glad
Though earth is bare
One more seed is planted there
Give up your strength
The seed to nourish
That in course the flower may flourish
People look east and sing today
Love - The rose - Is on the way

3 Stars Keep the watch when night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim
Shining beyond the frosty weather
Bright as the sun and moon together
People look east and sing today
Love - The star - Is on the way

4 Angels announce with shouts of mirth
Him who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley
Humming with the word
The Lord is coming
People look east and sing today
Love - The Lord - Is on the way

WE CONFESS

CALL TO CONFESSON

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Gracious God, you paint pictures of what could be, but we declare those visions impossible. You speak of the lion lying down with the lamb, but we spout skepticism and uncertainty. You dream of a more just day, but we poke holes in the plan, unable to fathom that horizon. Forgive us for losing sight of hope. Forgive us for assuming that what we see is all there is. Open up our hearts to see the world as you see it. Open up our hearts to risk hope, to dream dreams, and to not be afraid of either. With gratitude we pray, amen.

WE LISTEN

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE Matthew 1:18-25 Evelyn Kuserk

Leader: The word of the Lord;
People: Thanks be to God.

SERMON Rev. Lindsey Altvater Clifton

"Words for the Beginning: Hope is Worth the Risk"

WE RESPOND

MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

SERMON HYMN #11

O Lord, How Shall I Meet You? VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN

1 O Lord, how shall I meet You,
How welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet You,
My Hope, my heart's Delight!
O kindle, Lord most holy,
A lamp within my breast,
To do in spirit lowly
All that may please You best.

2 Love caused Your incarnation,
Love brought You down to me;
Your thirst for my salvation
Procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling,
That led you to embrace
In love all loves excelling
Our lost and fallen race.

3 A glorious crown You give me,
A treasure safe on high,
That will not fail nor leave me
As earthly riches fly.
My heart shall bloom forever
For You with praises new,
And from Your Name shall never
Withhold the honor due.

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in a God who gives us reason to hope, a God who fills our nights with stars, who follows winter with spring, who dwells with and among us. We believe that this God has dreams for creation, dreams of justice like a mighty stream and swords that will be beaten into plowshares. Therefore, we push cynicism aside. We risk vulnerability. We hold onto hope, and we declare: "My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND 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

Call to Give

Offertory O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is — Carl Schalk

Chancel Choir

O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is
My paradise at which my soul reclineth.
For there, O Lord, Doth lie the Word
Made flesh for us; herein Thy grace forthshineth.

Thou Christian heart, Whoe'er thou art,
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee!
For God's own Child, In mercy mild,
Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee!

The world may hold Her wealth and gold;
But thou, my heart, keep Christ as thy true Treasure.
To Him hold fast Until at last
A crown be thine and honor in full measure.

*Doxology #592

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow — OLD HUNDREDTH

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

*Prayer of Dedication

*SENDING HYMN #8

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates — TRURO

1 Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates,
Behold, the King of glory waits;
The King of kings is drawing near;
The Savior of the world is here!

2 Fling wide the portals of your heart;
Make it a temple, set apart
From earthly use for heaven's employ,
Adorned with prayer and love and joy.

3 Redeemer, come! I open wide
My heart to Thee: here, Lord, abide.
Let me Thy inner presence feel;
Thy grace and love in me reveal.

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella — arr. Laurel Hunt Pedersen

Flowers are given from Kristin Swanick in memory of her mother, Nancy Thomas Flemming; her father, Ronald Flemming; and her brother, Kirk Flemming