

December 24, 2023
Fourth Sunday of Advent
11:00am — Sanctuary



“Advent Triptych” by John Swanson
featuring the Advent serigraphs - *Shepherds, Nativity, and Epiphany.*

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
WEST WAYNE STREET



Welcome to First Presbyterian Church!

Thank you for joining us today! We're grateful for your presence and invite you to take part in our worship, mission, and programs. Please join us after worship for coffee, cookies, and punch in our fellowship hall, called McKay Hall. Just follow the crowd, and you cannot miss it! Then, we hope you return this evening for a special service of Lessons and Carols with an orchestra and *Silent Night* by candlelight. Livestreaming is available to watch via the website or YouTube, but we know this is no substitute for the community built through in-person connections. We're glad you're here!

-Rev. Dr. Anne Epling, Rev. Carrie Winebrenner, Rev. Dr. Youngsoo An, and Rev. Ann Pitman

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**Those who are able, please stand*

Congregation responds in bold

GATHERING

Prelude Chorale Prelude on *Still, Still, Still* Paul Manz
Chorale Prelude on *What Is This Lovely Fragrance?*

Tolling of the Hour

Call to Worship

How does a weary world rejoice?

We sing songs of hope.

We allow hope to change us, to strengthen us.

We tell the stories of what could be.

We listen for God's word.

We resist the temptation to give up or give in.

We remember Mary's song.

We gather for worship.

We hope.

We hope.

Against all odds, we hope.

Friends, this is the day that the Lord is still making. Let us worship holy God!

Lighting of the Advent Candles

Penny Pulz and June Schwertfager

*Hymn No. 110 Love Has Come

BRING A TORCH



1 Love has come: a light in the dark - ness!
 2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der.
 3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us!

(D) (Bm7) (Em) (A7) (D)
 F Dm7 Gm C7 F



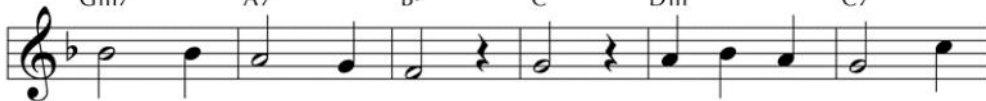
Love shines forth in the Beth - le - hem skies. See, all
 Love is God now a - sleep in the hay. See the
 Love is life ev - er - last - ing and free. Love is

(A) (D) (Bm) (D) (A) (G) (D)
 C F Dm F C B^b F



heav - en has come to pro - claim it; hear how their song of
 glow in the eyes of his moth - er; what is the name her
 Je - sus with - in and a - mong us. Love is the peace our

(Em7) (F#7) (G) (A) (Bm) (A7)
 Gm7 A7 B^b C Dm C7



joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to you, a
 heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the name she
 hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the gift of

(D) (A) (G) (A) (D) (A) (A7) (Dsus) (D)
 F C B^b C F C C7 Fsus F



Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
 whis - pers. Love! Love! Je - sus, Em - man - u - el.
 Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

***Call to Confession**

Family of faith, we all know that a small group of convicted people can change the world. That's how it's always been. People like Mary, Zechariah, John the Baptist. And yet, we rarely feel like we can be one of those people.

We downplay our ability to make a difference. We choose pessimism over optimism. We sweep hope under the rug for the sake of realism. We forget to play in our joy. Fortunately for us, our God carries enough hope and grace for all of us. So let us speak the truth of our lives, and let that honesty change us as we pray.

***Prayer of Confession**

Holy God,

More days than not, hope feels like the rain.

**We try to hold onto it with cupped hands,
but eventually, it slips right on through.**

Forgive us for holding hope so loosely.

Forgive us for allowing the realities of today to define tomorrow.

**We know that this world needs people of hope, so today we pray:
turn us into those people.**

Teach us how to sing Mary's song of hope for the world.

With open hearts we pray, amen.

***Assurance of Pardon**

Body of Christ, no matter how many times we let hope slip through our fingers, we still belong to God. So hear and repeat these words after me:

I am God's beloved.

I am God's beloved.

I am forgiven.

I am forgiven.

I am blessed and sent to serve.

I am blessed and sent to serve.

This is the good news of the Gospel. This is a hope we can hang our hats on.

Thanks be to God for God's unending love. Amen.

*Sharing the Peace of Christ

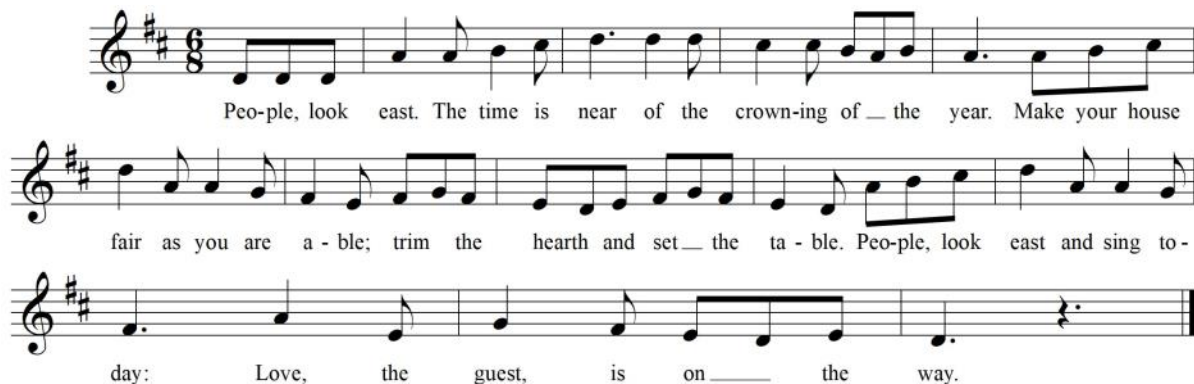
The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

As you are comfortable, we invite you to take a moment to share the Peace of Christ with those around you with a smile, wave, or other signs of connection.

*Responsive Hymn No. 105 People, Look East

BESANÇON



Peo-ple, look east. The time is near of the crown-ing of _ the year. Make your house
fair as you are a - ble; trim the hearth and set _ the ta - ble. Peo-ple, look east and sing to -
day: Love, the guest, is on _ the way.

HEARING THE WORD

Prayer for Illumination

The Christmas Story Told Another Way written by Janice Bacon and Jeffrey J. Groene

Instead of a traditional Scripture reading and sermon this morning, we present an intergenerational, interactive Christmas pageant. Done in the style of a melodrama (a story or play in which there are a lot of exciting or sad events and in which people's emotions are wildly exaggerated,) our actors were handed their roles this morning, with no rehearsal other than having heard this miraculous story before.

We pray that this story, told in a new, exciting way, will allow your inner child to hear the Good News with fresh ears. Gloria in Excelsis Deo !

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

*Hymn No. 136 Go, Tell It on the Mountain

GO TELL IT

The Children's Choir will sing the refrain. Everyone sings on the verses.

Children's Choir:

Go, tell it on the moun-tain, o-ver the hills and ev - ery - where;

go, tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!

Fine

All:

1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when lo! a - bove the earth
3 Down in a low - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born,

be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.
rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless - ed Christ-mas morn.

to Refrain

Announcements

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.

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory In the Bleak Midwinter

Harold Darke

Chancel Choir

In the bleak mid-winter frosty wind made moan; earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone; snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak mid-winter long ago. Our God, heaven cannot hold him nor earth sustain, heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign: in the bleak mid-winter a stable-place sufficed the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ. Enough for him, whom cherubim worship night and day, a breastful of milk and a mangerful of hay; enough for him, whom angels fall down before, the ox and ass and camel which adore. What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a Shepherd I would bring a lamb; if I were a Wise Man I would do my part, yet what I can I give him, give my heart.

*Doxology 137 He Came Down

HE CAME DOWN

The musical score is written for a single voice part in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of three staves of music. The lyrics are: "1. He came down that we may have hope; he came down that we may have hope; he came down that we may have hope; hal - le - lu - jah for - ev - er - more." The score includes a first ending bracket over the first staff and a second ending bracket over the second staff. There are three triplet markings (indicated by a '3' above a bracket) over the notes 'we may' in the first, second, and third staves.

*Prayer of Dedication

Holy One, this Advent season we wait in hope, and we give with joy. Joy for all you have given us; joy because of your sacred promises. Receive these generous offerings, and use them to spread your joy in our world. Amen.

1 An - gels we have heard on high, sweet-ly sing-ing o'er the plains,
 2 Shep-herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?
 3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see him whose birth the an - gels sing;

and the moun-tains in re - ply ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
 What the glad - some ti - dings be which in - spire your heaven - ly song?
 come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ, the Lord, the new - born King.

Refrain

Glo - - - ri - a

in ex - cel - sis De - o! Glo -

- - - ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!

SENDING

***Benediction**

Today, we have heard the stories of old, the stories of God's salvation.

With Mary, we have pondered these things in our hearts.

With Joseph, we realize that our work has just begun.

Like the shepherds running through the fields and magi chasing the star,
we know we must joyfully share the Good News!

Go out into the world to love and do as Christ would have you do.

As we depart, we know that the love of God goes with us wherever we go.

So, go. Tell it on the mountain.

Jesus Christ is born!

***Postlude** We Wish You A Merry Christmas

Traditional

Refrain: We wish you a Merry Christmas; We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Verse: Good tidings we bring to you and your kin; Good tidings for
Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Refrain: We wish you a Merry Christmas; We wish you a Merry Christmas;
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*As our special guest greets us, walking up the center aisle, we invite all children of
God to follow him to McKay Hall while singing along with the postlude!*



Christmas Music and Flowers Donations

GIVEN IN HONOR OR IN MEMORY OF LOVED ONES



Music Donations

In loving memory of

Jerry Winters by Mary Winters

Marcus and Louise Cornelius White by Beth White

Fred and Ruth Rasp by Jane McGeehan

Bill Kern by Joan Kern

James Ator by Irene Ator

Her parents by Kathryn Miller

Tom Foltz, and their parents by Lucinda Foltz

Jack Spindler, as well as parents and grandparents Robert & Anni Rodel by Diana Spindler

Loved ones by Robert and Sarah Savage

Mary Jo Meyer by Fran Page

Charles H. & Lillian S. Fish; and Ida B. Scudder by William Fish

E. Ross and Marian Adair by Stephen & Kathy Adair

Loved ones by Kristi Celico

Loved ones by Carole Parker

Loved ones by Rollyn & Julie Coverdale

Josh Gerow by Nancy Gerow

John and Sharon Schulenburg by Chris & Heidi Schulenberg

James and Rebecca Davis, Carol Davis, Helen Davis-Hansen and Darren Collins by Denise Davis

Loved ones by Marcia McKibben

Our son, Robert Mergenthal, parents Emmet and Ruth Mergenthal and LaMarr and Irma

Bercaw, and Jim's sister Nancy Mergenthal by Jim and Sondra Mergenthal

Loved ones by Karen Sandman and Mark Carbaugh

Loved ones by Robert and Jennifer Nickerson

Leo Casso by Angela Green

Her parents by Susan Dorion

Jerry Winters by Eric Evans & Sherrie Steiner

Ellen and Don Fleming by Nancy Shriner

Dr. H.S. Lee by Antoinette and Margaret Lee

Loved ones by Kenneth and Mary Jane Ormerod

Miles & Lorraine Davis by Phil & Vicky Davis

Loved ones by Scott McMeen & Marjorie Sapp

Continued

Byron & Isabel Sites and Tom Graham & Judy Sites by David Sites & Nancy Graham
Dr. & Mrs. Frederick G. Perry, Gene & Betty Lancaster, John Walter Lancaster, and Frederic
“Fritz” Lancaster Perry by Gil Perry
Her parents by Robert & Kathleen Beatty

And in honor of

Her new grandson, Hervé Jean Parfitt by Jill Therrien
His parents, Mark & Jeanene Neuenschwander by Brent Neuenschwander
Andrew, Meredith, Eleanor & Evan Palmison by Carol Rhudy
All the incredible families of First Pres and her nibblings by Pastor Carrie

Flower Donations

In Memory of

Patty Griest by Eric Evans & Sherrie Steiner
Their parents Gene & Mary Lou Mettler; and Gene & Helen Rydell by Tom and Judy Mettler
Tom Foltz, and their parents by Lucinda Foltz
Her parents by Kathryn Miller
Max & Carol Achleman; Charles H. & Lillian S. Fish; Charles Scudder Fish & Ida B. Scudder
by William Fish
Loved ones by Stephen & Kathy Adair
Loved ones by Susan Cornejo
Loved ones by Rollyn & Julie Coverdale
R. Allen and Carol Keirn, Max E. and Grace Kester, and Chance Beck by Susan & Edward Kester
Loved ones by Marcie & Steve Weissner
Her grandparents, uncle, and friends lost by Rev. Carrie Winebrenner
Charles & Bonnie Reed by Phil & Vicky Davis
Janet K. & Mark C. Chapman by A.R. and L.T. Chapman
Loved ones by Scott McMeen & Marjorie Sapp
His parents by Robert & Kathleen Beatty



Assisting with Worship this Morning

Pastors: Rev. Dr. Anne Epling, Rev. Carrie Winebrenner

Advent Candle Lighters: Penny Pulz and June Schwertfager

Assistant Director: Arthur Satter

Elders of the Month/Greeters: Carolyn Krebs and Carole Slater

Ushers: Dan Serban, Jack Patton, David Beer, Anne Barnett

Director of Music Ministries & Organist: Brent Neuenschwander

Assistant Organist: Kathryn Miller

Soloist: Quinton Davis, Tenor

Assistant Children's Choir Director: Freddy Patton

Children's Choir: Mathilda Borton, Alan Huffman, Honor Kester-Haney, Justine Kinder, Mae Kinder, Eleanor Palmison, Evan Palmison, Bea Patton, Freddy Patton

Children's Choir Accompanist: Irene Ator

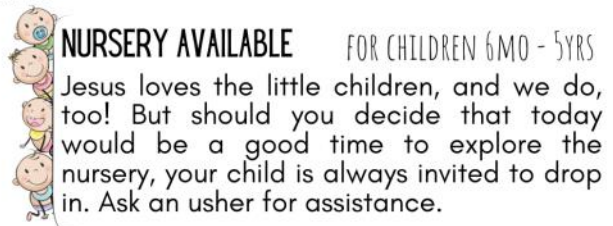
Live Stream Operator: Dick Florea

Sound Board Operator: Jeff Slater

MINISTRIES FOR OUR YOUNGER DISCIPLES



Hearing the Christmas story is so important that we'd like all God's children to be in worship today. But be not afraid! Sunday School for our Kinders thru 5th grade will be back next Sunday! Miss Rachel and friends be excited to welcome you back.



NURSERY AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN 6MO - 5YRS

Jesus loves the little children, and we do, too! But should you decide that today would be a good time to explore the nursery, your child is always invited to drop in. Ask an usher for assistance.



Please return after church, so it's there next week!

Worship isn't always easy for little hands and minds to focus, so you are invited to "check out" a fidget toy-filled Busy Bag or a book from our Littles' Library, located in the narthex!