

Faith Presbyterian Church

*Christians growing in Faith by caring,
connecting, & serving community*



FOURTH SUNDAY
OF
Advent

**CELEBRATING GOD'S LOVE ON THE FOURTH
SUNDAY OF ADVENT DECEMBER 20, 2020**

GOD'S PEOPLE GATHER

CHIMES

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

(Keith and Sheryl Williams)

Leader:

Soon we shall celebrate the birth of Jesus. We worship God with joy in our hearts as we are reminded of the words the angel said on that first Christmas Day: "Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people."

A reading from John 15:9-11

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

Leader:

We light this candle to proclaim the coming of the light of God into the world. With the coming of this light there is joy, joy that is ours not only at Christmas but always.

Light all candles in the wreath.

Please join me in prayer...

Unison Prayer:

O Holy One, as Christmas draws near, there is a sense of expectation in the air. We look to find joy in our lives and sense it in those around us. Still, for some of us this is a sad time because of the challenges of this year. Help us to have the joy that does not depend on earthly happiness, but on you. Help us to be filled with your joy so that we may share it with all who are open to receive your message. Amen.

ADVENT SONG

*Light the Advent candle four: Think of joy forevermore;
Christ Child in a stable born, gift of love that Christmas
morn.*

*Refrain: Candle, candle, burning bright, Shining in the
cold winter night; Candle, candle, burning bright, Fill
our hearts with Christmas light.*

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Come, Lord Jesus, come. Come into our hearts. Come into our homes and our community. May we welcome you everywhere, making room for you, preparing for you, anticipating your arrival with joy. We confess today that we have not always welcomed you; afraid that we might be asked to change, or to do something we are reluctant to do. And so shine your light in those nooks and crannies we keep in the shadows. Sweep the cobwebs from our long-hidden doubt and fear. Repair our torn and wounded places. Despite our doubts and

fears, we long for your arrival. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.

A TIME OF QUIET/PERSONAL CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PARDON

*RESPONSE

“Go Tell It On the Mountain”

Go, tell it on the mountain Over the hills and everywhere; Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

PASSING THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you!

And also with you.

Please share a sign of God's peace- a nod of greeting, a wave of hello, a bow wishing your neighbors God's peace, God's Shalom.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

GOSPEL READING

Luke 1:46-56(p.724)

SPECIAL MUSIC

SERMON

“A Prayer for Joy”

Once there was a little boy who was really mean. No matter what his parents tried, it seemed he just couldn't learn how to be nice. Christmas was coming soon, and the little boy was writing his letter to Santa. It turned out to be 12 pages of all the latest games and toys. When his parents saw the letter, they were concerned that he still wasn't getting the message about giving as well as receiving. So the father took his son's hand and led him into the living

room and sat him on the floor in front of the family's nativity scene. He said to his son, "I want you to sit right here and look at Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus, and the shepherds and the wise men, until you remember and understand what Christmas is all about. Then I want you to write a letter to Jesus."

So the little boy sat there a while looking at the nativity and then he went to find a pen and paper. He sat back down again and began to write: "Dear Jesus, if you will bring me all the presents I want, I will be good for a whole year." Then he thought for a moment and tore up the paper. He started his letter again and he wrote, "Dear Jesus, if you will bring me all the presents I want, I will be good for a whole week." But once again he tore up the paper.

He sat there on the floor for a few more minutes, looking intently at the nativity scene. Then he gently reached in and picked up the figure of Mary. He went back to his room and found an old shoe box. He wrapped Mary up in some tissues and put her into the shoe box and then put the box way back in the back corner of his closet. Then he wrote another letter: "Dear Jesus, if you ever want to see your mother again..."

Today is Mary's moment, not to be hidden in a shoebox in the closet, but to be the center of attention and to sing what is called the Magnificat which in Latin means "My soul magnifies the Lord." Mary has just arrived at her cousin Elizabeth's house and Elizabeth has reminded her that she is blessed because Mary believes that God will be true to the promises God has made to her. And so Mary sings her song of joy about all the good things God has done. As we listened to her words, we might have wondered, is this real? Or is this just wishful thinking?

God has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.” Hmm, is this a dream? Is it really true? Given the year we have just lived through, can we believe Mary’s words?

Before we decide one way or another, think about these words from our favorite carols. *Joy to the World, the Lord is come, let earth receive her king!* or *O Come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant*. Our carols are either full of triumph and joy like these two, or they tend to remind us of fairy tales, like this one... *Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright*. Really? A baby has just been born outside with the animals, and all is calm? There were so many people at the inn that they couldn’t squeeze in just one more poor family, and the night is silent? Or how about *Away in a Manger*: think about that second verse: *the cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes*. Really? What baby do you know who doesn’t cry? We don’t think critically about the words we sing at Christmas because we love them so much and we’ve been singing them forever. But let’s ask ourselves: do our carols make us think that the Christmas story is a fairy tale?

The Magnificat versus Christmas carols: what’s the difference? Well, there’s a big difference. For starters, Mary’s song is in the Bible. The Christmas carols are not. Mary’s song has deep roots in scripture. Its words are very similar to what others had already proclaimed about God. How about Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel: *“My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your*

deliverance.” Or Moses and Miriam, who sang along with the people after crossing the Red Sea: *“I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted... 2 “The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.”* Or Deborah the judge who sang, *“Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will praise the Lord, the God of Israel, in song.”* Or any of a number of King David’s Psalms.

Mary, along with Hannah, and Moses, Miriam, Deborah and King David, is making a choice to emphasize the good. Imagine you are holding a magnifying glass. You can hold it over anything you want and look through it. It’s going to make whatever you see look bigger. Mary held her magnifying glass over all the good things God has done. God looks out for the people most at risk; like those who are humble, and those who are hungry and those who want to work for him including the people of Israel. But Mary could have held her magnifying glass over other things. How about her anger and fear at being forced into the position she’s in without her consent? Which one of us would choose to walk a mile in Mary’s shoes? Or bare feet, more likely. By getting pregnant out of wedlock, Mary is risking a lot: her reputation, her family’s reputation, her future. Instead of focusing on God, she might have magnified her worries about what the neighbor’s might think, or her anxiety over whether or not Joseph would accept her, baby and all.

And so the question for all of us today is, if Mary magnified the Lord with her words and her actions and her whole life really, what do we magnify? When someone looks at our lives, what do they see? We all have more than one story to tell. So which one do we lift up? The one where we are alone and afraid? Or the one where we reach

out of our loneliness to make a difference for ourselves and others?

How about this approach: that Mary, in simply saying these words out loud, is helping to make them real. In other words, the idea that the hungry will be filled with good things might always be a fairy tale because the problem of hunger in our world seems so overwhelming. But words matter, don't they? With our words, we can magnify God, or we can magnify our problems. With our words we can lift up a problem that needs our attention, or we can complain and make ourselves and others miserable. Our words can lead people to God or drive them away.

In Guatemala in the 1980s, Mary's song was banned from being read aloud in public. The government wouldn't allow people to read it because they were afraid that hearing the words of the Magnificat would cause a riot. That's how powerful scripture can be. But while that probably wouldn't happen here, these verses, more than simply being a beautiful poem, call us to action. They call us to look beyond ourselves, beyond our families, beyond Faith Church and this community, to the wider world. The Magnificat is Mary's prayer of joy. Today it is ours too. Amen

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

HYMN #2095 (STF)

“Star Child”

Star-Child, earth-Child, go-between of God, love Child,
Christ Child, heaven's lightning rod,

Refrain: This year, this year, let the day arrive when
Christmas comes for everyone, everyone alive!

Street child, beat child, no place left to go, hurt child, used
child no one wants to know, *Refrain*

Grown child, old child, mem'ry full of years, sad child, lost
child, story told in tears, *Refrain*

Spared child, spoiled child, having, wanting more, wise child,
faith child, knowing joy in store, *Refrain*

Hope-for-peace Child, God's stupendous sign, down-to-earth
Child, Star of stars that shine, *Refrain*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Sharing Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

Call to the Offering

*Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Christ, all people here below;

Praise Holy Spirit evermore;

Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**Gracious God, despite this year's challenges, we thank
you for this season when our eyes turn once more to
Bethlehem. Thank you for your most precious gift of
Jesus. We offer you our lives and these gifts: our hopes**

and our plans, our work and our play. May love, justice and joy blossom from what we have given. Amen.

*HYMN #40

“Joy to the World”

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive its king; let ev'ry heart prepare him room, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness, and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

*BENEDICTION

RESPONSE *#603 (v. 1) Song of Simeon

Lord, bid your servant go in peace,

Your word is now fulfilled.

These eyes have seen salvation's dawn,

This child so long foretold.

POSTLUDE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please plan on joining us on Zoom at 6:30 Christmas Eve for a very special Christmas Service with carols and candles. We will begin with memories from years past, a time to socialize, and then our worship service.

Popcorn with the Pastor continues! Join us Tuesday's @ 6:30 pm. Contact Pastor Julia or Don Niece to receive the link to join on Zoom.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY

<i>Maria Beimly</i>	<i>Rick Latimer</i>	<i>Jan Schroeder</i>
<i>Bob & Emily</i>	<i>Norma Leshner</i>	<i>Mary Swartzel</i>
<i>Christian</i>	<i>Betsy Morris</i>	
<i>Beth Griffin</i>		

*Pastor Julia Williamson
Music Director John Derrickson
Secretary Sarah Harner*

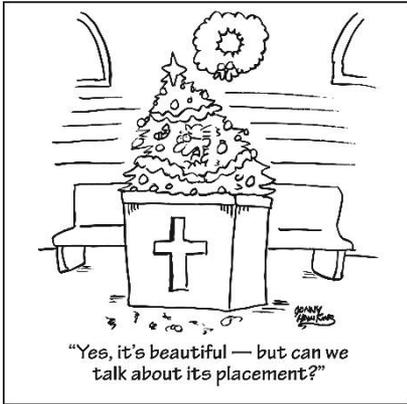
*5555 Chambersburg Rd. Huber Heights, Ohio 45424
Regular Office Hours T- Th 9 AM- 12 PM
937-233-0873*

Be of good cheer!

Church Mice

Karl Zorowski





We are praying for Hope in 2021 and to see all in the new year.

