

DECEMBER 1, 2024

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Mifflin Avenue United Methodist Church

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Welcome Visitors: We are pleased you have chosen to worship with us today. If you have questions concerning the service, please feel free to ask an usher or a person sitting near you. If you do not have a permanent church home, please consider joining us. May God bless your experience in worship with us today. We are here to serve, so please let us know how we might better serve you.

ORDER OF WORSHIP – 11:15 AM

CELEBRATION THROUGH CENTERING

PRELUDE

GREETING, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER REQUESTS

CENTERING WORDS

The kingdom of God is close at hand. Be alert and see the signs of hope.

CELEBRATION THROUGH ADORATION

OPENING HYMN & BRINGING FORTH THE LIGHT

“All Earth is Waiting”

No. 210, Vs. 1, 2 & 4

CALL TO WORSHIP

Pastor: As we journey through the Sundays of Advent, listen to the promises of God:

People: a righteous branch springs forth,

Pastor: a promise of justice and righteousness,

People: a promise of safety.

Pastor: Listen to the promise of Jesus:

People: the kingdom of God draws near.

Pastor: Keep alert; watch for signs of hope.

People: Our Advent journey begins.

OPENING PRAYER

God of every season, as we begin our journey through Advent, turn our hearts toward you. Guide us into your realm of peace and joy. Teach us to set aside our worries, as we walk in faithfulness and trust. May the love within us be born anew. Help us remain alert, that we may respond to pain and suffering and notice the signs of abundant life all around us. Come, Lord Jesus; come to us now, we pray. Amen.

INTROIT

“Hail to the Lord’s Anointed”

No. 203, V. 1

CHILDREN’S MOMENTS

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY (The Candle of Hope)

Pastor: Hope in the midst of hopelessness—life can occasionally throw us for a loop. But the message of Advent and Christmas is that hope can be born when you least expect it.

People: In a world where so many have lost hope, we call upon the Lord of hope to come.

Pastor: In this season of Advent, we wait for the coming of Hope into our world. We await the birth of the Christ-child, the coming of God into our lives in a new way.

LIGHTING THE CANDLE OF HOPE

HYMN

(to the Tune “Away in a Manger”

No. 217

Light one Advent candle and whisper a prayer

For hope for a world often lost in despair.

Light one Advent candle and wait for the morn

When new birth will happen and light will be born.

Pastor: Take a deep breath and reflect on what gives you hope. (Silence)

PRAYER

Holy God, we pray for the hope that is in Christ to come into our lives in a new way. May we become hope that is alive in the world. Amen.

CELEBRATION THROUGH THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Pastor: Prepare the way of the Lord.

People: We listen for the word of God.

CHORAL RESPONSE

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

No. 234 (refrain)

*“O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord”*

FIRST LESSON

Jerimiah 33:14-16

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

“Angels We Have Heard on High”
“*Gloria, in excelsis Deo! Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*”

No. 238 (refrain)

GOSPEL LESSON

The Lord be with you,

And also with you.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

Glory to You, O Lord.

*THE GOSPEL IS READ

Mark 13:24-37

THE GOSPEL RESPONSE

The Gospel of the living Christ.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*GLORIA PATRI

No. 70

CELEBRATION THROUGH PROCLAMATION

MINISTRY OF MUSIC

‘It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year’

Rebecca Spencer & Emmelia Gaebel

SERMON

”Is It the Most Wonderful Time of the Year?”

Pastor Russel Shuluga

CELEBRATION THROUGH FORGIVENESS AND PARDON

CALL TO CONFESSION

Because it is so hard to wait, it is not easy to live through Advent's days. But watch what God does during this time. God waits for us to turn from our old ways to find the right paths; God waits for us to admit what we have done, and failed to do, so we might be forgiven and graced with new life. Let us approach the One who waits -- for us!

GENERAL CONFESSION

Pastor: God of light and love, your prophets call us to prepare for your coming, and to open our hearts to all who seek compassion and relief.

People: Too often, we close our ears to cries of pain, closing ourselves off from the healing power of kindness and love.

Pastor: Your messengers call us to straighten the paths of all who might stumble, and to make a way in the wilderness, where there seems to be no way at all.

People: Too often, we close our eyes to the sight of those in need, fearing that justice for others will bring loss to ourselves.

Pastor: You call us to bring light into the shadowy places, and to be messengers of your coming into a world of death and despair.

People: Forgive us when we are unwilling to bear your light, when we close off the pathways of our hearts to those who are in need of your good news.

SILENT CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Pastor: Hear the good news: When we cannot find our way through the gloom, God gives light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

People: **In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.**

HYMN OF ASSURANCE

'O Little Town of Bethlehem'

No. 230, V. 4

***O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray'
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!***

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

May God increase our love for one another and strengthen our hearts in holiness, as we greet one another in peace.

May the peace of the Lord be with you.

And also with you.

CELEBRATION THROUGH COMMITMENT

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

As God promises to execute justice and righteousness in the world, God invites us to help make this promise a reality. Let us offer our gifts and our lives, that all may be blessed.

THE LORD'S OFFERING

OFFERTORY ANTHEM

*DOXOLOGY

To the Tune "What Child Is This"

***"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all creatures here below.
Praise God above, ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary."***

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

We thank you, God, for the hope we feel this day. We are blessed by this community of love, this sanctuary of acceptance. We place our trust in you, knowing that you care for us. With deep gratitude for all you provide to us, we offer our gifts to you. Centered our hearts during this season of giving. Amen.

CELEBRATION THROUGH HOLY EUCHARIST

GREAT THANKSGIVING

Pastor: As we wait to celebrate Christ's birth, may the Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Pastor: As we await Christ's return, let us lift up our hearts.

People: **Our hearts are lifted to our God.**

Pastor: As we trust the one who comes to us, let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **Hope is in our hearts, and praise is on our lips.**

Glory and praise are offered to you, God of Advent. On the first day of eternity, you began to create all that is true and just, beautiful and blameless, calling all that you shaped and formed "Good!"

Our ancestors danced in Eden's fields, pure and innocent, but hearing the tunes the world played, they turned away from you. When you called us back through the mouths of the prophets, we defied you to follow those with power and pain. Then you sent John, your messenger, to proclaim the coming of the One who ushers in your kingdom of justice and righteousness.

Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with those who, from the first day to the last, glorify your name, singing,

THE SANCTUS

Sung to the tune of "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord! God of Hosts, by all adored!
Heaven and earth cannot contain all the glory of Your name!
Hail, Hosanna, God Most High! Blest is He who now draws nigh.
In the name of God the King! Hallelujahs glad we sing!
Hail, Hosanna! Praises due be forever, Lord, to You!

And you give us this great gift: Child of Life, Prince of Peace, Emmanuel —God-with-us! In the birth of a tiny baby, born on the edge, born in a shack, visited by the poor, guarded by his parents' love, you give us yourself! He laughed with those who laughed, he grieved with those who grieved, he listened and taught, but most of all—he loved. He loved us with a love that pointed us back to You. He loved us with a love that shocked and challenged. He loved us with a love that raised up the lowly and sent the powerful away to reflect and learn. He loved us into a new relationship with You. Your Christmas gift to the world. Thank you, loving God!

Thank you, loving God!

On the night before his life would be ended, ended because overwhelming love can sometimes cause fear to react in violent ways, Jesus sat with his friends, celebrating, like we sit with our friends, celebrating. Together, they remembered the story of the people of Israel, brought out of slavery by your love. During the meal, Jesus took a loaf of bread and blessed it, giving thanks to You, God, for your gift of life. He broke that bread and passed it to his disciples, and said, "This is my body, given for you. Each time you eat this, remember me." When the meal was almost over, Jesus took a cup of wine, and blessed it, giving thanks to you, God, for your gift of love. He lifted that cup, passed it to his disciples, and said, "This is my life's blood. This is my promise. This is for you and for the world. Each time you drink, this remember me." So, we eat, we drink and we remember. A tiny baby born in a shack. A great teacher. God-with-us—then and now. We remember.

Sung to the refrain of "What child is This" (Greensleeves)
O Christ has died, O Christ is risen
Christ will come again. Yes, Christ has died!
Yes, Christ is risen! The Christ will come again!

THE CONSECRATION

Holy Spirit, come to us, and to these gifts of the bread and the cup. As you transform these everyday objects into sacramental grace, transform us from ordinary folk into the citizens of God's kingdom. Fill us with the Bread of heaven, so we would feed the hungriest of your children. Pour the cup of grace into us, so we might overflow with love. Make us a compassionate people, who have a passion for your justice.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory are yours, Great God, our Hope, our Peace, now and forever. Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

Sung to the tune "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"
Our Father, Lord on Heaven's high throne, most holy be your Name. Your Kingdom, come. Your will be done—in heaven the same. Give us, this day, the food we need; forgiven may we be. Into temptation do not lead; from evil set us free. Yours is the kingdom, unto you in grateful love we bow; And yours is the power; Lord, let us view your mighty presence now. The glory yours, your praise be sung by angel hosts and men, In every land, by every tongue, forevermore! Amen.

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

THE THANKSGIVING

Sung to the tune "Angels from the Realms of Glory"
Thank the Lord, his praises voicing for this promised faithfulness!
All who seek the Lord, rejoicing, tell his love, his name confess,
For He leads us, with thanksgiving in the paths of righteousness.
At Your Word, Lord, let Your servant go in peace, for with my eyes,
I have seen Your bright salvation, Israel's Light, begin to rise,

CELEBRATION THROUGH SENDING

*BENEDICTION

Be people of hope. Let hope live in your heart and share the hope of Christ with all you meet. Share hope by noticing someone else's humanity. Share hope by listening to someone's story. Share hope by praying for our world. In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share hope.

*BENEDICTION RESPONSE

"The First Noel"

No. 245 (Refrain only)

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.

*RECESSIONAL HYMN

"Emmanuel, Emmanuel"

No. 204 (sing twice)

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel.
God with us, revealed in us, his name is called Emmanuel.*

*POSTLUDE

WE TAKE THE LIGHT OF CHRIST INTO THE WORLD