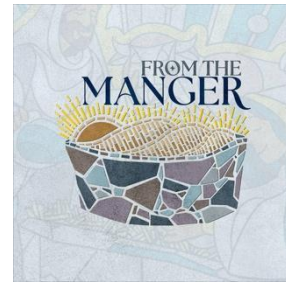


The Presbyterian Church of Okemos
December 15, 2024
Third Sunday of Advent



Preparation: “We tend to think that joy is not only not properly religious but that it is even the opposite of religion. We tend to think that religion is sitting stiff and antiseptic and a little bored and that joy is laughter and freedom and reaching out our arms to embrace the whole wide and preposterous earth which is so beautiful that sometimes it nearly breaks our hearts. We need to be reminded that at its heart Christianity is joy and that laughter and freedom and the reaching out of arms are the essence of it.” – Author and pastor Frederick Buechner, *The Hungering Dark*, 1968.

Gathering As a People of God

Invitation to Our Shared Ministry

Rebecca Mattern

Prelude

Choral Partita *From Heaven Above to Earth I Come*
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, organ

Friedrich Zachau

Lighting the Advent Candle of Joy

Connor Haskel & Carl Lira

One: A long time ago, a baby was born in a town called “House of Bread.” His name was Jesus. After his birth, Mary, his mother, witnessed the shepherds glorifying and praising God, filled with joy at what they had seen. She treasured these things in her heart.

All: We have lit the candles of hope and peace. Today, we light the candle of joy. Joy is when you feel so thankful you could burst with excitement and gratitude.

One: As we light this candle, we are reminded that, from the manger, joy is growing...growing to be God with us. His name is Jesus, Bread of Life.

Choral Introit

From the Manger
Westin Sorrel, solo

Amanda Meisenheimer
Arr. Andrea Hamilton

From grassy field to Jesus’ side, a humble shepherd runs back home.
Forever changed one holy night, compelled to make these wonders known.
From pastures green all will be fed.
Joy from the fields to the breaking of bread.
From the manger joy grows. He will be God with Us.
From the manger joy grows. Bread of Life, Jesus.

*** Call to Worship**

Sally Belloli, Liturgist

One: Have you heard the good news? A baby is to be born in Bethlehem, and his birth will bring joy to the world!

All: Jesus will be born to make all things new!

One: Have you heard the good news? God anointed Jesus to proclaim good news to the poor.

All: Jesus will proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind. Jesus will set the oppressed free, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

One: Fill us with uncontainable joy as we lift our voices in praise and gratitude. Let the deep joy of this third week of Advent nourish our souls today.

All: Let us worship with glad and joyful hearts—Jesus will be born soon!

*** Hymn #107**

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn, vs. 1-4

[Rejoice, Rejoice]

Prayer of Confession

Pastor Lisa Schrott

One: Let us confess the ways in which we've failed to embody Christ's joy.

All: God of abundant grace, in this season of Advent, we confess the times we've sought our own happiness or comfort at the expense of others. We have ignored others' needs and joys, overlooked the hungry, and forgotten true joy comes from sharing our abundance. We have forsaken the joy found in uplifting others and ensuring their needs are met. Help us turn away from self-centeredness and toward a life of compassion and generosity. Likewise, we confess the times we have neglected our own joy, treated ourselves unkindly, worked when we should have rested, abandoned the interests and hobbies we cherish, and served purposes that drag us down. Let the expectant joy of Advent inspire us to return to ways that bring us joy. May the world be fed with joy. (Silent prayer) Amen.

Promise of the Gospel and Passing of the Peace

Pastor Lisa Schrott

One: Hear the good news: God's joy is for all people, and God's forgiveness is for all who seek it. Because of God's great love for us, we are forgiven. Receive God's pardon and be at peace.

All: Thanks be to God. Amen.

One: It is because we receive God's pardon that we can be at peace. So take this moment to pass peace to your family, friends, and neighbors, for we cannot make this long Advent journey to the manger alone. May the peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you. Please greet your fellow worshippers in ways you feel comfortable.

*** Act of Praise #583**

Gloria, Gloria

Jacques Berthier

[Gloria]

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

The Word

Children's Message: Journey to the Manger

Pastor Lisa Schrott

Prayer of Illumination

sung

#88 *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, vs. 6*

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Old Testament Scripture

Isaiah 9: 2-7

Rebecca Mattern

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

* Hymn #129

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming, vs. 1-3
[Es Ist Ein Ros']

New Testament Scripture

Luke 2: 15-20

Pastor Lisa Schrott

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

From the Manger: Hungering for Joy

Pastor Lisa Schrott

*Affirmation of Faith: Joy

Rebecca Mattern

One: Let us affirm our commitment to and belief in the Christian discipline of joy. We believe joy breaks out when everyone is free and fed.

All: We believe joy happens when we feel so thankful we could burst with excitement and gratitude.

One: We believe everyone was made for joy, but life circumstances make joy more elusive for some.

All: In all circumstances, we rejoice in the Lord while never forgetting the suffering of others.

One: We believe the joy of the Lord may be found both on mountaintops and in valleys, in seasons of plenty and seasons of want.

All: Because of this miracle of joy, we do not despair, nor do we leave people to languish.

One: Let the people be joyful, not in spite of our hunger, but because we have fed one another with generosity.

All: Let the people be joyful when our tables are covered in love and liberation, when everyone has what they need. Amen.

Special Music

Joy to the World Arr. Stephen DeCesare
Youth Instrumental Choir adapted by Sarah Mayhew
Sarah Mayhew, Director
Lizzie Conroy-Krutz, violin; Alex Juarez, trumpet
Claire Mayhew, French horn; Hazel Morgan, French horn
Evan Haskel, viola; Emma Roy, viola
Connor Haskel, cello; Nina Roy, cello
Andrew Mayhew, euphonium; Spencer Locke, tuba

Responding to the Word

Minute for Service

Deacon's Fund

Beth Layhe

Offering

Rebecca Mattern

Invitation

Offertory

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Johannes Brahms

***Doxology #606**

***Prayer of Dedication**

Prayers of the People

Sally Belloli, liturgist

One: Lord in your mercy.

All: Hear our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

in unison

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.

Sent Out As a People of God

*** Hymn #539**

We Will Go Out with Joy, vs. 1-3

*** Benediction**

One: May Christ, the Bread of Life, in whom we find joy and strength for the journey, bring you cheer this week.

May the love of our Creator, who calls us to care for the hungry and oppressed, surround you.

And may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to imagine a realm where all needs are met, strengthen you, now and always.

All: We go in hope, peace, and joy to feed the hungry, comfort the afflicted, and share the good news of Christ's coming.

Postlude

Praise Ye The Lord of Hosts from *Christmas Oratorio* Camille Saint-Saens
Dr. Marlene Brewbaker

* *Please rise in body or spirit*

Ushers: Jeff Arbour, Brett & Lynn Cone, Catherine Holdway

This Morning's Fellowship Team: Thank you to Parish Life for supplying the birthday cake to celebrate members and friends born in December and to Gary VanKempen for taking care of the coffee.

Education Hour: Christmas Traditions from Around the World and Your Home

Next Week: December 22, 2024 Fourth Sunday of Advent

All Ages Christmas Pageant - *And A Little Child Shall Lead Them*

Education Hour: Extended Time of Fellowship and Christmas Carol Sing

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Rebecca Mattern (she/her), Interim Director of Faith Formation

Dr. Marlene Brewbaker, Organist

Westin Sorrel (he/him), Chancel Choir Director

Irene Shutt, Handbell Choir Director

Edward Ennen, Sexton

Anna Thiel, Office Manager

Gabrielle Shelton (she/her), Media Specialist