

Trinity United Church of Christ Worship Bulletin

December 22, 2024

Fourth Sunday of Advent

www.trinityuccwestville.org

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at Trinity!

Gathering and Preparing to Worship

Sounding of the Bells

Throughout the centuries, bells have rung to call people to worship or bring them news. We use the chiming of the bell to joyously call us to worship, and prepare ourselves.

Welcoming

One: Welcome to worship today at Trinity United Church of Christ in Westville Illinois. If you are worshipping with us on line, you can download a bulletin from our church's website

www.trinityuccwestville.org.

They are located in the events section under today's date,

Let us now pause for prayer to calm ourselves down and prepare our hearts to worship our living and loving God.

Opening with Prayer

By Nancy Townley

One: Let us pray...

Many: Lord of all life and all seasons, help us open our hearts to hear the words of promise and love that you send to us. Like Joseph, may we trust in your abiding love and power. Prepare us to receive your gift of grace and peace. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

Lighting the fourth Advent Candle

Based on liturgy from the United Methodist Church

One: Isaiah said that the Lord spoke to the king and said, "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven" (Isaiah 7:11). But when the king refused, God would not be stopped. "Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14 NRSV).

God wants us to know, even when we aren't sure ourselves. God wants us to experience God's presence, even when we think we can handle life on our own. God sends us signs of God's presence with us; all we need to do is keep our eyes open and look.

We light these candles, the candle of joyous hope, of proclaimed peace, of deep everlasting joy, and today of presence that speaks of love, as a sign that no matter our circumstance, we know we are not alone.

Light all four candles of the Advent wreath.

One: Let us pray...

By Nancy Townley

Many: Come, O Holy One, as the beloved child, Emmanuel! Soften our hearts and open our arms for your coming that we may make this a place worthy and warm, kindly and safe for all your children, in the name of Your son, Jesus. Amen.

Announcements

Call to Worship

By Nancy Townley

One: This is the fourth Sunday of Advent, a time to rejoice in the wondrous things that God is doing.

Many: Our hearts are filled with the hope that is coming into the world.

One: The time is fast approaching, not for parties or presence, but for the awareness of God's loving gift to us-- the gift of the Christ child.

Many: Help slow us down, Lord, that we may realize that your gift of love is at the center of our lives and our celebrations.

One: Thanks be to God who again reminds us of God's eternal love.

Many: Open our hearts, O Lord, to receive your blessed gift.

*Hymn of Gathering #251 Blue Hymnal

1 It came upon the midnight clear
That glorious song of old
From angels bending near the earth
To touch their harps of gold
Peace on the earth, good will to all
Come swiftly on the wing
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing

3 And you, beneath life's crushing load
Whose forms are bending low
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow
Look now, for glad and golden hours
Above its sad and lowly plains
O rest beside the weary road
And hear the angels sing

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

2 Still through the cloven skies they come
With peaceful wings unfurled
And still their heavenly music floats
Over all the weary world
From heaven's all-gracious King
They bend on hovering wing
And ever over its babel-sounds
The blessed angels sing

4 For lo, the days are hastening on
By prophets seen of old
When with the ever-circling years
Shall come the time foretold
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing

Call to Confession

By Rev. Thom Shuman

One: How easy we lost our way on the road to Bethlehem! How quick we are to dismiss the dreams and hopes our God has for us in this holy season! Let us come to the One who approaches, ready to swaddle us in forgiveness and grace, as we pray together our prayer of confession

Prayer of Confession and Letting Go

By Rev. Thom Shuman

One: Let us pray...

All: Come now, Reconciler of the nations, for our world, our lives, need your peace more than ever before. Come, Caller to discipleship, for we long to let go of our own self-interest. Come, Word Gifter, for we hunger to hear your voice once again. Come, Servant of the poor, so we notice you in all those we push past in this hectic season.

Please take a few moments of silence for personal reflection.

One: Let us continue...

All: Come, Lord Jesus, and forgive us for turning your compassion into commercials, your joy into jingles, your hope into hollow words, and your love into lust for the short-lasting offerings of the world. May we find our way to the One born simply, born gracefully, for us – Jesus, the son of God; the Child of wonder and life. Amen.

Words of Forgiveness and Assurance

By Rev. Thom Shuman

One: We may not notice them there, at the back of the pile of presents, but it is God's hope, God's life, God's mercy, and God's Grace, which are the true gifts we receive each and every moment.

Many: **We give thanks to our gracious God, who has forgiven us and blessed us. Amen!**

*Gloria Patri

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end, Amen, Amen.*

Sharing of Christ's Peace

One: The psalmist sings, "For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, 'Peace be within you.'" Turn now to your own relatives and friends, your sisters and brothers in Christ, gathered here in the house of the Lord, and greet them with the peace of Christ. May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Please type in, post and share the peace of Christ with those gathered.
Please make sure your comments are appropriate. You can use words such as
"The peace of Christ be with you,"

Listening for God's Still Speaking Voice

Prayer for Illumination

One: We do not know the year of your coming, but we do know how to prepare.

Many: **We must live as peacemakers.**

One: We do not know which day peace will reign, but we do know how to prepare.

Many: **We must clothe ourselves with Christ.**

One: We do not know the hour the world can breathe again, but we do know how to prepare.

Many: **We must live honorably at all times.**

One: We do not know when the Prince of Peace will come, but we do know how to prepare.

Many: **We must listen to the Word, pray constantly for peace, and walk in the light of the Lord. Amen.**

Scripture Readings for Today

Luke 1:26-38

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷For no word from God will ever fail."

³⁸"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

A Refection on the Word

* Hymn of Response Bulletin Insert Gentle Joseph, Joseph Dear

1 "Gentle Joseph, Joseph dear,
stay with me, for the baby's near;
God will surely your goodness hear,
as you will love this new-born child," says Mary.

2 "Gladly Mary, Mary mine,
I will cradle the child divine;
Here will heaven and earth combine,
for you will bear God's child, O dearest Mary."

3 "Peace to all and God's good-will,"
heaven and earth with this song will fill;
Soon will God, in the evening still,
be born in Bethlehem, the child of Mary.

Offering of Our Gifts and Our Lives

One: We must not take the gifts God gives to us, even the most tangible ones, and hoard them for ourselves. Rather, we offer them, as well as our hearts and lives as offerings to those in true need around us. So, as God has so richly blessed us, in our gratitude let us return a portion of these blessings back to God. If you are able, please consider giving to the work and ministry of Trinity United Church of Christ. You may drop your offering for today in the offering plates as they are brought forward. Your gifts are used in service to others through the ministries and mission of Trinity UCC We graciously thank all who are able to support Trinity UCC during this time. To mail your offering or pledge, please send it to

Trinity UCC, 311 E. Moses Ave. Westville, IL. 61883

One: Our morning offering will now be received

*Doxology

"Emmanuel"
Em-man-u-el, Em-man-u-el,
His name is called Em-man-u-el;
God with us, re-vealed in us;
His name is called Em-man-u-el;

* Blessing What We Can Give Back to God

By Rev. Thom Shuman

One: Let us pray...

Many: We pray that with our gifts, as well as our lives, we will tell of those who are given voice, those who are put back on their feet, those who show us the way, and those who offer us grace and hope, as well. This we pray in the name of Bethlehem's Babe. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Please drop off any prayer requests in the basket located in the narthex, or in the offering plate.

Please only first names, and keep your prayers appropriate to our worship.

If you are worshipping via Facebook Livestream

Please type in and post in the comments section and share any prayer requests.

We will try and get to every prayer posted during worship.

If we don't get to your request, we will lift up your requests after worship.

After Pastor David reads the petition, he will say "Lord in Your mercy,"

and the congregation will respond with "**Hear our prayer...**"

The Lord's Prayer (debts/debtors)

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.

* Our Hymn of Departure

#250 Blue Hymnal

O Little Town of Bethlehem

1 O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

2 For Christ is born of Mary,
and, gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King
and peace to all the earth.

3 How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

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 Immanuel!

* Charge and Benediction

One: Come, let us go with God to bring healing to the world.

Many: Come, let us bring family to the lonely, comfort to those who grieve.

One: Come, let us go with Jesus to all are forgotten.

Many: Come, let us carry justice to the oppressed, to feed those who hunger in body and soul.

One: Come, let us go with the faithful Spirit.

Many: Come, let us speak the gospel with our lips, let us share grace with our lives.

One: Come, let us go out into the world in peace. Remembering to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and all your strength; and love your neighbor as yourself.

Many: We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

One: Go forth, knowing that the God who created you, the Christ who redeems you and the Spirit who empowers you is with you today and for ever more. Knowing this, may laughter and joy go with you every step of your journey.

Many: Amen.

Sing "A-men"

Thank you for worshipping with us today! Remember, no matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here at Trinity UCC