



Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Sunday, December 20th, 2020

Dear Lake Toxaway family and community,

I read from Psalm 42:1-2 this morning as a part of my devotional time: As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul long for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God (NRSV).

My thoughts and imagination were directed to the 2 real trees in our home and how we check the water daily in the stands and how we hope the trees continue to require additional water. These trees were purchased and decorated last weekend and we keep them up through the twelve days of Christmas and longer; yes, we are the ones who extend Christmas into Epiphany or late January. Yes, we are those neighbors! When the trees need a liter or more each day, we are encouraged these trees will remain fresh throughout this season.

There is a Spanish Christmas hymn I learned in high school with a chorus roughly translated: "The fishes in the river are jumping and dancing, jumping and dancing because God is born." There are several variations of this hymn based on the locations of Spanish speaking persons. In Mexico in the desert, there is a version that translates roughly "In the high desert, you have to drink before you can dance, jump, and dance because God is born."

I think the Psalmist knew such a thirst; his soul longs for the living God! The Psalmist remembers being in the midst of great celebrations, but now that joy is dried up. He thirsts for God's life-giving waters.

Dry times are not limited to physical deserts or summer seasons. With only a few days before Christmas, I know the Psalmist's thirst! Even if it were to snow on Christmas Eve, I feel the loneliness of wanting to be in full community and full worship. I feel the exhaustion of extra work, isolation, grief, and pain among so many in my sphere of pastoral ministry. My own soul is weary too. I need to remind myself and you: drink and return to drink from the river of God's love!

Mary experienced shock in receiving the Good News of God's selection of her to carry the child, Jesus, and to be his mother. Yet, she surrenders to God's plan and sings a song used by many of her ancestors and rejoices in God, her Savior. She knew to drink and to return to drink from the river of God's love and favor!

I need to be reminded of God's faithful and ever-flowing river of love! May we drink and return to drink from the river so we can dance in celebration of God's incarnation and our celebrations even in this time of challenge and invite others to the river of God's love, the Christ, the Savior of the world!

In humble service,

Marcus

**Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Community Worship Service
Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 20th, 2020**

9:30 A.M. Livestream link: <https://youtu.be/xeGwMcDswYg>

PRELUDE

Good People All, This Christmas Time
Irish Carole

arr. Jack W. Jones

GREETING

*L: Host of Hosts, from sunrise to sunrise,
and generation to generation, we are your people.*

***P: You have been with us wherever we have gone.
You will be with us wherever we may go.***

*L: You planted us in a land flowing with milk and honey,
then you planted our salvation in Mary's womb.*

***P: Jesus, who is the Christ, is planted firmly
in each one of us.***

L: Our souls magnify the Holy One.

P: Our spirits rejoice in God, our Savior.

HYMN #240

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Located in the back of the bulletin - (Printed w/ permission)

OPENING PRAYER

***Beloved, Holy Creator God,
we welcome you to this house of worship,
the sacred space built over a century ago,
to gather together as your people.***

***Here we come to offer you
our thanksgiving and praise
in response to the abundance
of your creation.***

***Here we come to share with you
our prayers of confession and petition,
for they lie heavy on our hearts.***

***Even knowing that you are here
and everywhere,
we come longing to hear you say,
"I am with you always." Amen.***

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Reader 1: Mary proclaims even in the midst of her own personal uncertainty,
"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed." (Luke 1: 46b-48)

Reader 2: Mary, a young woman of low estate, heard the word of God and, though
bewildered, received it as love and blessing. Because of her humble faith, she became
the mother of our Savior.

Reader 1: We have been lighting the candles of our Advent wreath,
the first for hope, (light one blue candle)
the second for peace, (light second blue candle)
the third for joy. (light the pink candle)

Reader 2: We continue our journey by lighting the fourth Advent candle, the candle of
love.

Reader 1: It reflects for us the love of Mary for her God and for her child and even
more, the love of God that reaches for each one of us where we are. May we be open
to receive the gift that is so near to us even in this moment. (light the last blue candle')

Pastor: Let us pray:

***O God, we gather as your people, waiting anxiously and hopefully for your
arrival. Yet even now, we hold back, unable or unwilling to take these last
few steps to receive the great gift of love you offer to us. In this holy
moment, grant each of us the faith, the courage, and the willingness to finish
the journey, to open our hearts, to kneel at your manger, to realize that as
we come to you imperfectly, you come to us in perfect love. Help us receive
you dear, Lord. Amen.***

SCRIPTURE READINGS

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

- 7:1 Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him,
- 7:2 the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent."
- 7:3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."
- 7:4 But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan:
- 7:5 Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?
- 7:6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle.
- 7:7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"
- 7:8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel;
- 7:9 and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.
- 7:10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly,
- 7:11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.
- 7:16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Luke 1:46b-55

- 1:46b "My soul magnifies the Lord,
- 1:47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**
- 1:48 for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

1:49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

1:50 His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

1:51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

1:52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

1:53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

1:54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

1:55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Romans 16:25-27

16:25 Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages

16:26 but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith --

16:27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Luke 1:26-38

1:26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,

1:27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

1:28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

1:29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

1:30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

1:31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

1:32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

1:33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

- 1:34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"
- 1:35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.
- 1:36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.
- 1:37 For nothing will be impossible with God."
- 1:38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

L: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

P: Thanks be to God!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(Responsive prayer)*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

(Let us offer our silent confessions.)

*Compassionate, Forgiving God,
we trespass on your mercy
and take your favor for granted.*

We think only of ourselves.

*We forget the lessons
of those who came before us,
and ignore our responsibility
to those who will follow us.*

We grow proud and seek power.

*We do not see the destruction of our actions
and how it distances us from you.*

***We do not recognize our hunger for what it is,
or where it leads us.***

We grow faint.

Bring us home to you, Merciful Beloved

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

*The Holy One forgives and bestows favor
on each of us, even and especially
when we are lowly in spirit.*

*We are blessed from generation to generation
by the Mighty One, whose strength and mercy*

are forever.

In the name of Christ, you are forgiven.

In the name of Christ, you are forgiven.

HOMILY

STATEMENT OF FAITH *(The Apostles' Creed, Ecumenical Version)*

***I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.***

***I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.***

***I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.***

GLORIA PATRI (UMH #70)

***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.***

OFFERING

<https://www.wnccumc.org/online-donations-to-churches>

OFFERTORY

What Child is This arr. Paul Manz
English Carol

DOXOLOGY

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Gracious and Generous God: We offer our gifts to you, knowing full well we have devoted so much more energy into finding the gifts for our families and much less on the gifts we offer to you. You gave Mary, an unmarried girl, a Son so the world might have a Savior. Her response was so simple: "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be according to your word." May her affirmation of faith and obedience be the gift we offer this day. In Christ, we pray. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE WITH 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN #230

O Little Town of Bethlehem
Located in the back of the bulletin - (Printed with permission)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

He is Born arr. Robert W. Powell
French Carol

STAFF & LAY VOLUNTEERS

Pastor: Marcus Dodson: 828-553-0282, marcus61dodson@gmail.com
Organist: Charlie Steele: cwsorgan@comporium.net
Church Administrator: Saunders Grommesh, 469-569-2314, administrator@laketoxawayumc.org
Lay Leaders: Barbara Kline: 828-862-5585 and Paula Markert: 828-553-9434
Audio/Visual for Livestream Chair: Andy Harvill
Soloist/Vocalist: Will Cowan
Advent Candle Lighting: Fred and Paula Markert
Liturgist: Scott Walter

Prayer Concerns of the Community

Please pray for Rev. Evelyn Owen-Patterson and her son. Evelyn is the pastor of the Selicia UMC, so we also need to pray for the congregation. They were in a bad car accident and is hospitalized with serious engeries.

Please pray for Chad Zimmerman, Doris Sims, Thomas Blackstock, Cathie Fussell's nephew, Jeff Tilley, Marty Young, Madison Coleman & the Jeter family and Frank Hardin.

Please continue to pray for those who have had the death of a loved one in the recent weeks and months.

Flowers on the Altar

The flowers on the altar are given to the glory of God and in loving memory of Ruth Cech by Marcus, Kim, Maggie, Jeremy and Emilee Dodson.

Wreaths on the church doors

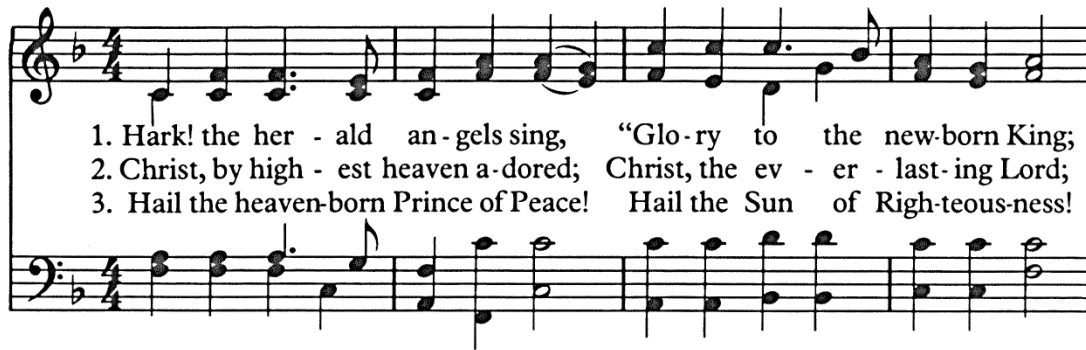
The Lake Toxaway Garden Club has donated the two wreaths on the church doors.

<h2>Announcements</h2>

Candles Available for Pickup: On Monday, Dec. 21, 2020 from 9:00am to 11:00am Barbara & Jerry Kline will be at the Fellowship Hall distributing candles to use for your candle light service at home for those who wish to have them.

Christmas Eve Service Details: Marcus & the Worship Committee have been in discussions regarding our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. In order to maintain the health and safety of our congregation our Christmas Eve Service this year will be a live virtual service. It will be at 7:30 PM on Dec. 24, 2020. Only the individuals necessary to conduct the service will be in attendance.

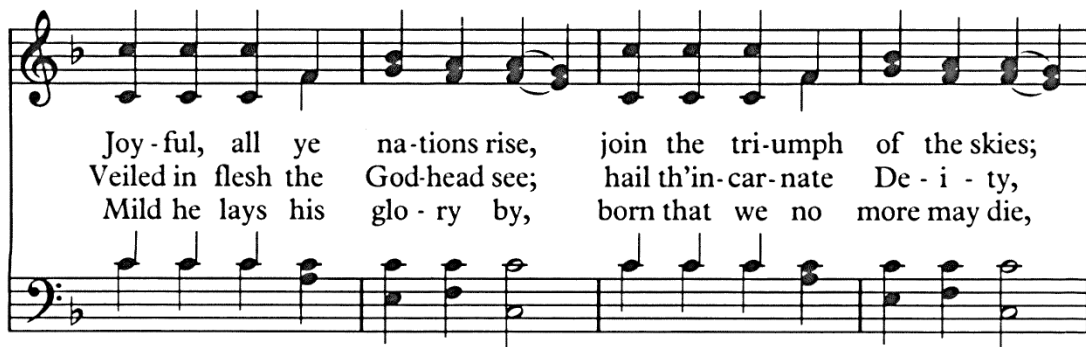
240 Hark! the Herald Angels Sing



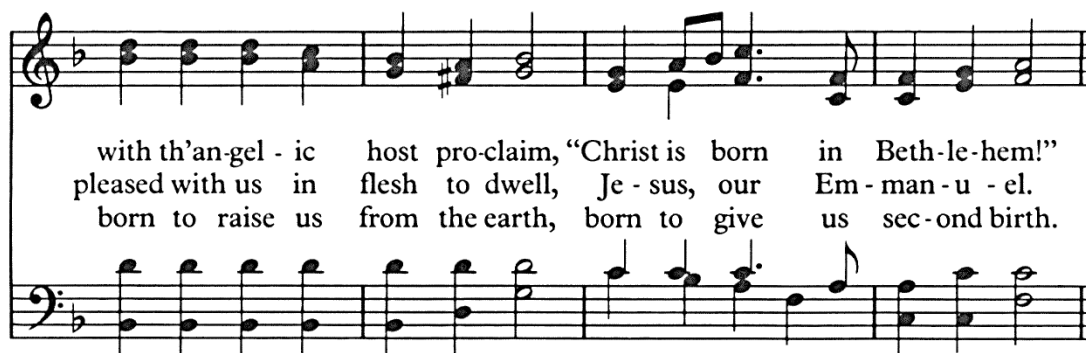
1. Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King;
 2. Christ, by high - est heaven a - dored; Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord;
 3. Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righ - teous - ness!



peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"
 late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all he brings, risen with heal - ing in his wings.



Joy - ful, all ye na - tions rise, join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God - head see; hail th'in - car - nate De - i - ty,
 Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,

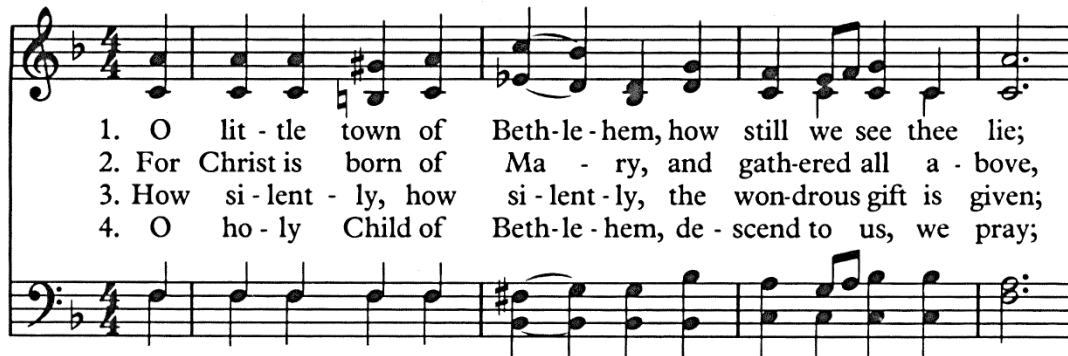


with th'an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el.
 born to raise us from the earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.

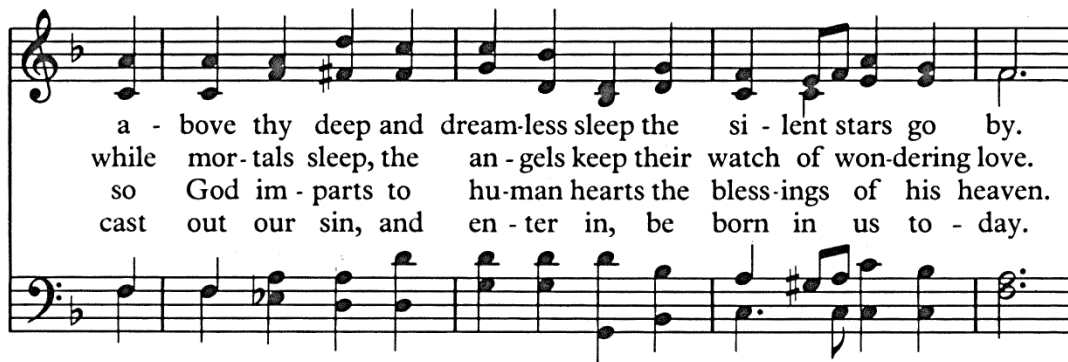
WORDS: Charles Wesley, 1739; alt. by George Whitefield, 1753, and others (Lk. 2:8-14) MENDELSSOHN
 MUSIC: Felix Mendelssohn, 1840; arr. by William H. Cummings, 1856 77.77 D with Refrain

230

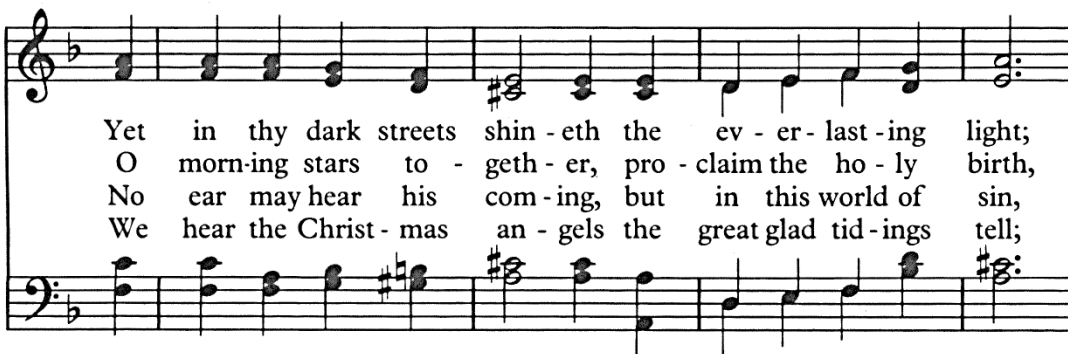
O Little Town of Bethlehem



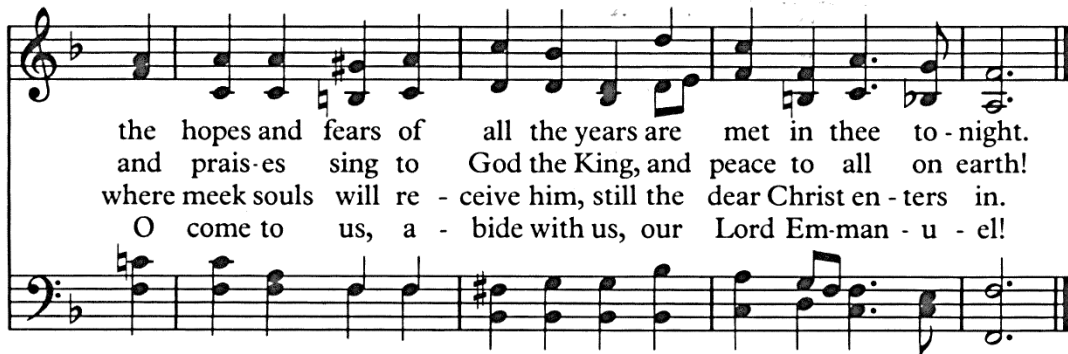
1. O lit - tle town of Beth-le - hem, how still we see thee lie;
 2. For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and gath-ered all a - bove,
 3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won-drous gift is given;
 4. O ho - ly Child of Beth-le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



a - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by.
 while mor-tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won-dering love.
 so God im - parts to hu-man hearts the bless-ings of his heaven.
 cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.



Yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light;
 O morn-ing stars to - geth - er, pro - claim the ho - ly birth,
 No ear may hear his com-ing, but in this world of sin,
 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;



the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
 and prais-es sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth!
 where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
 O come to us, a - bid with us, our Lord Em-man - u - el!

WORDS: Phillips Brooks, ca. 1868
 MUSIC: Lewis H. Redner, 1868

ST. LOUIS
 86.86.76.86

Alt. tune: FOREST GREEN