



*Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Third Sunday of Advent, December 17th, 2023*

Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Community Worship Service
Third Sunday of Advent, December 17th

9:30 A.M. Livestream is available on the LTUMC YouTube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgtuJe20i8DN7S_Cfg1sWCg

RINGING OF THE BELL – *Please observe silence as we prepare for the service.*

PRELUDE

Now Sing We, Now Rejoice Paul Manz

CALL TO WORSHIP (*Please stand as you are able*)

L: Love has come down to us this Advent Season.

P: Divine love which heals and transforms our lives.

L: With great joy, we receive that love and share it with others.

P: We open our hearts to all God’s children, the last, the least, and the lost, as well as those who feel privileged.

L: The Lord has done and continues to do great things for us.

P: Praise be to God who loves us so much and who challenges us to be people of joy in this darkened world. AMEN.

HYMN #220

Angels from the Realms of Glory
Located in the back of the bulletin - (Printed w/ permission)

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Reader 1: *When God’s people were surrounded by hardship, suffering, and grief, Isaiah proclaimed,*

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit (Isaiah 61:1-3a).

Reader 2: *We come today as people who are also surrounded by suffering and grief. And yet, the Spirit hovers among us, tending and anointing, inspiring freedom where there is captivity, declaring blessing in places the world has cursed, and igniting fierce joy where mourning and heartache prevail.*

Congregation: *We wait as people who experience hardship and pain, yet we are called to witness to the persistent joy that sustains our life as God’s people.*

Reader 1: *We light these candles as signs of our hope, peace, and fierce joy. May our lives shine with the fierce, tenacious joy of the Light who lives in our hearts as we wait and work for the coming of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.*

(Light the two existing blue candles of the Advent wreath, and the third one being the pink candle.)

OPENING PRAYER *(Please be seated)*

***Holy God of Joy,
We rejoice in the reality of who you are.
We live within the joy of your love for us.
Our contentment comes and goes.
Our happiness ebbs and flows.
Our feelings depend upon our circumstances,
our physical health, our brain chemistry.
But our joy is deeply rooted
in our identity as your beloved children.
And we give you thanks. Amen.***

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

- 61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;
- 61:2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;
- 61:3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion-- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
- 61:4 They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.
- 61:8 For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
- 61:9 Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
- 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
- 61:11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Psalm 126 (Psalter Lesson ~ Please read the bold text)

126:1 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

126:2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

126:3 The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

126:4 Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

126:5 May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

126:6 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 (Epistle Reading)

5:16 Rejoice always,

5:17 pray without ceasing,

5:18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

5:19 Do not quench the Spirit.

5:20 Do not despise the words of prophets,

5:21 but test everything; hold fast to what is good;

5:22 abstain from every form of evil.

5:23 May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5:24 The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

John 1:6-8, 19-28 (Please stand for the Gospel)

1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

1:7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.

1:8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

1:19 This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

1:20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."

1:21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No."

1:22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

1:23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

1:24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

1:25 They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

1:26 John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know,
1:27 the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal."
1:28 This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

L: This is the word of the Lord for the people of Christ.

P: Thanks be to God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(Please be seated)*

*Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.
(Let us offer our silent confessions.)*

Into the dark depths of our fear and anguish, you, O Lord, reach out to us. We need your guidance this day, for we have found it far too easy to stray into selfish pathways. We seek first our own comfort; we gather our toys and trinkets and proclaim that all is right with the world, yet our hearts feel strangely discomforted. Guide us and gather us, Lord. Teach us again to be people of peace, hope and joy. Help us to cast off the mantle of greed and hatred. Forgive us for the many times when we have ignored the cries of those in need; when we have turned our backs on opportunities to help others. Forgive us, Lord. Touch our hearts and bring your bright light of salvation to them that we might turn again to you and in your love may be part of ministries of peace and justice. Help us again to hear the voice of one who cries in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God." In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, we offer this prayer. AMEN.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God's forgiving love has been poured upon each one of us. Hear the good news! You are healed and forgiven! AMEN.

HOMILY

STATEMENT OF FAITH #883 *(United Church of Canada – Please stand as you are able)*

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

We believe in God:

***who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others by the Spirit.***

We trust in God.

***We are called to be the church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.
In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.
We are not alone.
Thanks be to God. 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.

HYMN #230

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

OFFERING

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

OFFERTORY

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel Kenneth T. Kosche

DOXOLOGY #95 (Please stand as you are able)

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise Him, all creatures here below
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost***

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (Please continue standing)

God of hope and compassion: Just as John the Baptist came long ago in Judea to witness to your light, we remember that light he heralds is the savior of hope. Sometimes it seems our world is determined to extinguish hope and light. We admit that there are times when we feel the darkness is just too prevalent, too strong, and hope is just wishful thinking. May we witness through our giving not scarcity and despair but fierce joy, hope, and compassion. May we also witness through what we say and what we do. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Please be seated)

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 #218 (Please stand as you are able)

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear
Located in the back of the bulletin - (printed w/permission)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE (Please be seated)

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice Robert J. Powell

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Flowers on the Altar

*The flowers on the altar are given by the **Klines and Dodsons in loving memory of Ruth Cech & to the Glory of God.***

2 services Sunday, 12-24-24

Sunday, 12-24-23 is the 4th Sunday of Advent and we will have our regular 9:30 AM service. We will have our Christmas Even candlelight service at 7:00 PM also on 12-24-23. We will not have a Christmas Day service.

Building Campaign Pledge Inquiries & Year End Gifts

If you made a pledge to the Fellowship Hall Building Campaign earlier this summer and forgot what you pledged for 2023, please reach out to John Lefler, our treasurer at jdlefler013@gmail.com. If you are considering a year-end gift, our mailing address is: LTUMC, P.O. Box 83, Lake Toxaway, NC 28747.

Building Update

The new Fellowship Hall has been framed last week and the new roof is scheduled to go on next week. The new walkway between the old Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary has been poured and is currently curing.

Thank you

*Thank you, **Fred and Paula Markert**, for providing the Christmas wreaths on the front doors.*

Outreach Update

The Outreach committee has ordered 93 hams for Christmas. SAFE received 3 hams, North Toxaway Baptist Church received 30 hams and Gods Way Food Pantry received 60 hams. Thank you for making a Christmas meal possible!

PRAYER CONCERNS OF THE COMMUNITY

Please pray for Arlene Hendrix as she enters into hospice care at home.

Please pray for those who have long-term illness, health concerns and special intentions.

Please pray for those having or had a surgery and their recovery.

Our heartfelt prayers for all who have experienced the recent passing of a loved one.

Please continue to pray for our student scholars, our local students, teachers and staff.

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: Paula Markert: 828-553-9434 & Scott Walter: 314-374-2969

Audio/Visual for Livestream Chair: Andy Harvill

Audio/Visual Scheduler: Fred Markert: 828-553-3303

Liturgist: Tom Blackstock

Hymns are located on the next few pages and used with permission via One License #737113-A

220 Angels from the Realms of Glory

1. An - gels from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er
 2. Shep-herds, in the field a - bid - ing, watch-ing o'er your
 3. Sa - ges, leave your con - tem - pla - tions, bright - er vi - sions
 4. Saints, be - fore the al - tar bend - ing, watch - ing long in

all the earth; ye who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry
 flocks by night, God with us is now re - sid - ing;
 beam a - far; seek the great De - sire of na - tions;
 hope and fear; sud - den - ly the Lord, de - scend - ing,

Refrain

now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
 yon - der shines the in - fant light: Come and wor - ship,
 ye have seen his na - tal star:
 in his tem - ple shall ap - pear:

come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born King.

WORDS: James Montgomery, 1816 (Lk. 2:8-20; Mt. 2:1-12; Mal. 3:1)
 MUSIC: Henry T. Smart, 1867

REGENT SQUARE
 87.87.87

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;

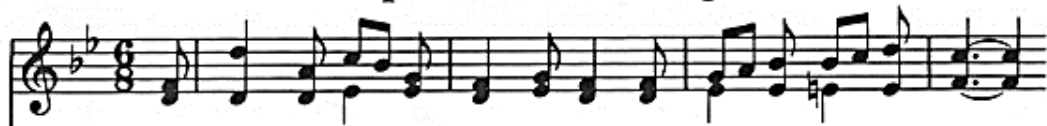
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
 and prais - es sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth!
 where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
 O come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el!

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

ST. LOUIS
 86.86.76.86

Alt. tune: FOREST GREEN

218 It Came upon the Midnight Clear



1. It came up-on the mid-night clear, that glo-rious song of old,
2. Still through the clo-ven skies they come with peace-ful wings un-furled,
3. And ye, be-neath life's crush-ing load, whose forms are bend-ing low,
4. For lo! the days are has-tening on, by proph-et seen of old,



from an - gels bend-ing near the earth, to touch their harps of gold:
and still their heav-en-ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world;
who toil a-long the climb-ing way with pain-ful steps and slow,
when with the ev - er - cir-cling years shall come the time fore - told



"Peace on the earth, good will to men,* from heaven's all-gracious King."
a - bove its sad and low - ly plains, they bend on hov-ering wing,
look now! for glad and gold - en hours come swift-ly on the wing.
when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an-cient splen-dors fling,



The world in sol-emn still-ness lay, to hear the an - gels sing.
and ev - er o'er its Ba-bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing.
O rest be-side the wea - ry road, and hear the an - gels sing!
and the whole world send back the song which now the an - gels sing.



**"all" may be substituted*

WORDS: Edmund H. Sears, 1849 (Lk. 2:8-14)
MUSIC: Richard Storrs Willis, 1850

CAROL
CMD