



*Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 24th, 2023*

Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Community Worship Service
Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 24th

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

The Wexford Carol arr. Jack W. Jones

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

L: Welcome, dear people, God has blessed our gathering.

P: We come again on this journey, following the light.

L: God's light shines for us today, bringing peace and comfort.

P: May we, like Mary, respond to God's presence and love, with confident joy.

AMEN.

HYMN #240

Hark the Herald Angels

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

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Reader 1: *When the angel Gabriel visited Mary, announcing God's plan for her to conceive and give birth to the Messiah, "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'" (Luke 1:34) And yet, only a few months later, Mary sings to Elizabeth, My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name (Luke 1:46-49).*

Reader 2: *We, like Mary, hear God's call to be part of making God's dream for our salvation and flourishing a reality, and we question, "How can this be? I am only..." Yet, like Mary, the "onlys" that make us hesitate are gifts God can and will use as God's love transforms us into bearers of good news.*

Congregation: *We wait as people who have encountered divine Love that disrupts the status quo and ushers us into abundant life marked by mutual love and peace that flows from the flourishing of all people.*

Reader 1: *We light these candles as signs of our shocking hope, our peace, our fierce joy, and the love that transforms us. May Love grow within us, transforming us into bold witnesses of God's salvation with our voices and our lives. Amen.*

(Light the four outer candles of the Advent wreath.)

OPENING PRAYER *(Please be seated)*

In the rush of preparation for holiday celebration, we come to this place to be fed by God. We need the peace, hope, love and joy that this season represents. We need to listen again with wonder at the magnificent words of Mary as she proclaims her faithful participation in God's most miraculous gift. Open our hearts this day, Lord, to receive the words and the blessings, to be fed and then to be those who will share with others as you have shared with us. In Jesus' Name, we pray. 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 (Psalter Lesson ~ Please read the bold text)

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 (Epistle Reading)

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 (Please stand for the Gospel)

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: 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.)

We confess we are not the people you hope us to be, Advent God.

The very ones you favor, we too often ignore or ridicule.

***The ones you knock off their pedestals,
we admire and emulate.***

***We are so focused on having more and more,
we risk being sent away empty.***

***Forgive us, Mighty God,
and look with grace upon us.***

***We would live secure in your love;
we would be the ones of peace for our world,
we would seek to do your will,
as did Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior,
in whose name we pray.***

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Even now—yes, even in this very moment,

God comes to us,

bringing hope,

bringing forgiveness,

bringing grace as freely offered gifts to us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen.

HOMILY

STATEMENT OF FAITH #887 (*Affirmation from Romans 8:35, 37-39 - Please stand as able*)

Leader:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation or distress,

or persecution or famine,

or nakedness or peril or sword?

People:

No,

In all things we are more than conquerors

Through the One who loved us.

We are sure that neither

death nor life,

nor angels, nor principalities,

nor things present, nor things to come,

nor powers, nor height, nor depth,

nor anything else in all creation,

will be able to separate us from the love of God

in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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 #219

What Child is This

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

OFFERING

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

OFFERTORY

Away in a Manger arr. Michael Burkhardt

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)*

Gracious and Generous God: We offer our gifts to you, knowing that the energy exerted in our giving is tiny compared to what we've expended finding the gifts for our families and friends. You have given us a glimpse of the gift you truly seek in the angel's conversation with Mary: when told that she would give birth to our savior, she simply said, "Yes, let it be according to your word." May that affirmation of faith and obedience be the gift we offer this day. In Christ, 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 #238 *(Please stand as you are able)*

Angels We Have Heard on High
Located in the back of the bulletin - (printed w/permission)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *(Please be seated)*

He is Born Robert J. Powell

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Eve Communion Candlelight Service

Our Christmas Eve Communion and Candlelight service will be at 7:00 PM tonight.

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.***

Thank you from Marcus, Charlie & Saunders

A heartfelt THANK YOU for the Christmas bonus given to your LTUMC Staff: Marcus, Charlie and Saunders especially at a time when our 2023 budget has not been met yet.

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.

Outreach Update

*The Outreach committee delivered **93 hams** for Christmas to SAFE, North Toxaway Baptist Church, and Gods Way Food Pantry. **Thank you for making a Christmas meal possible to so many in our community!***

Building Update

Pictures are being included in the Saturday bulletin email below the highlights. They are also uploaded to our website.

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: John Lefler

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

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.

Refrain

Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King!"

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

What Child Is This

219

1. What child is this who, laid to rest, on Ma - ry's
 2. Why lies he in such mean es - tate where ox and
 3. So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh, come, peas - ant,

lap is sleep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with
 ass are feed - ing? Good Chris - tians, fear, for
 king, to own him; the King of kings sal -

an - thems sweet, while shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
 sin - ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing,
 va - tion brings, let lov - ing hearts en - throne him.

Refrain

This, this is Christ the King, whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing;

haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Ma - ry.

WORDS: William C. Dix, 1865 (Lk. 2:6-20; Mt. 2:1-12)
 MUSIC: 16th cent. English melody

GREENSLEEVES
 87.87 with Refrain

238 Angels We Have Heard on High

1. An-gels we have heard on high sweet-ly sing-ing o'er the plains,
 2. Shep-herds, why this ju - bi-lee? Why your joy-ous strains pro-long?
 3. Come to Beth-le - hem and see Christ whose birth the an - gels sing;
 4. See him in a man - ger laid, whom the choirs of an - gels praise;

and the moun-tains in re - ply ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.
 What the glad-some tid - ings be which in - spire your heav-en-ly song?
 come, a - dore on bend - ed knee, Christ the Lord, the new - born King.
 Ma - ry, Jo - seph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise.

Refrain

Glo - - - - - ri - a,

in ex - cel - sis De - ol Glo - - - - -

- - - - - ri - a, in ex - cel - sis De - ol

WORDS: Trad. French carol; trans. *Crown of Jesus*, 1862, alt. (Lk. 2:6-20)
 MUSIC: French carol melody; arr. by Edward Shippen Barnes, 1937;
 harm. by Austin C. Lovelace, 1964
 Harm. © 1964 Abingdon Press

GLORIA
77.77 with Refrain