



First Presbyterian Church

149 Broad Street

Tonawanda, New York 14150 ~ 2111

Church: (716) 692-1319

Rev. Dr. Rebecca Chaffee

Come, Worship the Lord, Our God

3rd Sunday of Advent

CCLI License # 2839486

December 17, 2023

10:30 am

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Advent Candle Lighting:

Reader 1: We light the third candle of Advent.

(With the first two candles burning, a family member lights the third candle.)

Reader 2: Isaiah announced good news to the oppressed using the imagery of God as gardener: "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."

Reader 3: God sent John the Baptizer to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus Christ, the true Light of the World. John called for people to repent of their sins and to live faithfully. He baptized with a cleansing water and proclaimed the new life that Christ, the one who would follow him, would bring. This Advent, we ask for God's mercy and prepare for a joyful new beginning.

People : **Merciful God, we give thanks that you send messengers like John to call us to greater faith. We ask that in these days we prepare for you in prayer and acts of holy compassion. Forgive us and lead us to your light. Amen.**

INTROIT

95

Capo 1: (D) (G) (D)
E^b A^b E^b (chords continue)

Pre-*pare* the way of the Lord. Pre-*pare* the way of the Lord,
and all peo-ple will see the sal - va - tion of our God.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 8/8 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of text, with chords (D), (G), (D), E^b, A^b, and E^b indicated above. The second staff contains the melody for the second line of text. The lyrics are written below the notes.

**May be sung as a canon.*

All three synoptic gospels identify John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Messiah (Matthew 3:3/Mark 1:2-3/Luke 3:4) in accord with Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 40:3b). Because the latter part of the text (Isaiah 52:10b) has yet to be accomplished, this is still our mission today.

TEXT: Tainé Community, 1984
MUSIC: Jacques Berthier, 1984
Text and Music: © 1984 Les Presses de Tainé (admin. GIA Publications, Inc.)

PREPARE THE WAY
7.7.6.7

CALL TO WORSHIP

When God restores our fortune, our dreams will come true.

We will sing "Glory!" to our God; we will rejoice in our Savior's birth.

Our mouths shall be filled with laughter; joy shall chime from our lips.

God has made it clear: those who serve are God's children.

Then we will proclaim: 'look what the Lord has done':

so others will know beyond any doubt how the Holy One has blessed us with hope.

We wept - now we will cheer "Joy! Joy!" We were lost - now we will run home laughing.

For God has picked us up where we fell; God has kept the promises made so long ago.

GATHERING PRAYER

We thank you, O God, for all those in Scripture who have pointed to Christ: for your prophets Elijah and Isaiah, for other prophets, and for John. We thank you, too, for those in our lives who have pointed us to Christ: pastors and teachers, strangers and friends. Give us eyes to see him today among those who are oppressed, imprisoned, brokenhearted, or beaten down, and we will give our testimony, too: how Christ releases and sets free; how he turns ashes into garlands; how he repairs and builds up what was ruined. We, too, will point others to Jesus, the Light of the world. Amen.

***HYMN: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" #88 (vs.1,2,5,6)**

VENI EMMANUEL

CALL TO CONFESSION

God's promise to us is eternal. God wishes to bless us with hope, with joy, with life. But our desires lead us to reject God and these blessings. Let us confess how too often we choose the path of tears, rather than the joy which can lead us to God's heart.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We try not to do any evil, Anointing God, but it is so hard to let go of those little things we enjoy - gossiping about the pregnant girl in the neighborhood; making light of the accomplishments of a co-worker; daydreaming about someone else's partner.

Forgive us, Loving God. You have freely given us salvation, yet we act as if we are the ones who paid for it. Help us to rejoice always in your grace, and to give thanks in every moment for that life we receive through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Silence is kept

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Go, and take God's Good News to others:

- to those held captive by sin;
- to those cradling broken hearts;
- to those grieving lost relationships.

God forgives us all and makes us new.

Even as we rejoice in God's mercy, we will tell everyone we meet, "God has done such wondrous things for us, and wants to do the same for you!" Thanks be to God! Amen.

GLORIA PATRI: "Glory to God"

SERVICE MUSIC
583

Glory to God
Gloria, gloria

Capo 3: (Bm) (Em) (A) (D)
Dm Gm C F (chords continue)

Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, glo - ry in the high - est!
Glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a, in ex - cel - sis De - o!

Glo - ry to God, glo - ry to God, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

**May be sung as a canon.*

PASSING OF THE PEACE

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy One, giver of life and light, as your word is read and proclaimed, illumine our hearts and minds, that by the power of the Holy Spirit, our lives may reflect God's glory. Amen.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

¹The 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; ²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to 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. ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

⁸For 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. ⁹Their 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.

¹⁰I 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. ¹¹For 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.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

PSALM 126

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,

we were like those who dream.

²Then 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."

³The LORD has done great things for us,

and we rejoiced.

⁴Restore our fortunes, O LORD,

like the watercourses in the Negeb.

⁵May those who sow in tears

reap with shouts of joy.

⁶Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,

shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

ANTHEM: "Hope, Peace, Love and Joy" - Hearts4Worship

Original song by Diane Charsley, Kurt Ebsary, & Billy Welch

GOSPEL READING: Luke 1:46b-55

^{46b}"My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON: "God, the Gardener"

Rev. Dr. Rebecca Chaffee

SERMON HYMN: "O Day of Peace" #373

JERUSALEM

PASTORAL PRAYER AND PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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 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.

MOMENT FOR MISSION

CALL TO THE OFFERING

At this time of year, the abundance of some and the needs of so many stand in marked contrast. As we bring now our tithes and offerings, may Christ's heart rejoice and the needs of others be tended.

THE OFFERTORY

DOXOLOGY: "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" #607

OLD HUNDREDTH

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

May the gifts we offer in these moments be light for those in the shadows of society, be food for those who hunger, refreshment for those parched by life, and hope for all who cry out to you, O God. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN: "My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout" #10**

STAR OF COUNTY DOWN

CHARGE

The God who makes everything whole,
**sends us forth to bring healing to the broken-hearted
and to comfort the mourners in our midst.**

The Christ who comes to be with us,
**sends us forth to stand with the oppressed,
to release those held captive by sin,
to invite the lonely into our lives.**

The Spirit who calls you to faithfulness,
**sends us forth to proclaim the gospel
that today is God's moment,
the day when all people will be blessed.**

BENEDICTION "Go Now in Peace"

Natalie Sleeth

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of three systems. Each system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The first system begins with a double bar line and a circled '1' above the staff, indicating the start of the first phrase. The lyrics are 'Go now in peace,'. The second system begins with a circled '2' above the staff, indicating the start of the second phrase. The lyrics are 'go now in peace; may the love of God sur-round you'. The third system begins with a circled '3' above the staff, indicating the start of the third phrase. The lyrics are 'ev-'ry-where, ev-'ry-where you may go.' The piano accompaniment consists of a simple harmonic accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Go now in peace,

go now in peace; may the love of God sur-round you

ev-'ry-where, ev-'ry-where you may go.

**may be sung as a round*

Volunteers This Week 12/17:

Liturgist: Janet Haacker
Tech: Betsy Crocker
Usher(s): Alvin Marohn & Nathan Harrington
Coffee Hour: Leslie & Tom Dugan
Greeter(s): Lynn Hyland

Volunteers Next Week 12/24 10:30AM:

Liturgist: Pat Loeswick
Tech: Betsy Crocker
Usher(s): Linda Barry & Bonnie Zimmer
Coffee Hour:
Greeter(s): Janet Schurr
Communion:

Volunteers Next Week 12/24 11:00PM:

Liturgist: Sue Schurr
Tech: Betsy Crocker
Usher(s): Diane Charsley
Greeter(s): Nancy Rolando
Communion:

PRAYER CONCERNS

The prayer concerns have recently been updated. If you have a prayer request, please contact **Pastor Rebecca at 315-317-6140** or the church office at **716-692-1319**.

CALENDAR

Sunday, Dec 17

9:30am Faith Formation (All Ages)
10:30 am Worship for all ages (Sanctuary)
11:30am Coffee Fellowship for all ages (Parlor)

Monday, Dec 18

10:00 am Alcoholics Anonymous (Circle II Basement)
7:00pm Session Meeting

Tuesday, Dec 19

9:00am – 2:00pm Office Hours
10:00am – 6:00pm Pastor's Hours (and by appointment)

Wednesday, Dec 20

9:00am – 2:00pm Office Hours

Thursday, Dec 21

9:00am – 2:00pm Office Hours
10:00am – 6:00pm Pastor's Hours (and by appointment)
10:00am Alcoholics Anonymous (Circle II Basement)
6:00pm Hearts4Worship
6:45pm Bell Choir
7:15pm Choir

Saturday, Dec 23

10:00am Alcoholics Anonymous (Circle II Basement)

Sunday, Dec 24

10:30 am Worship for all ages (Sanctuary)
11:30am Coffee Fellowship for all ages (Parlor)
10:00 pm Refreshments (Narthex)
11pm Candlelight Worship (Sanctuary)

