

WESTOVER HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



ADVENT IV

A SERVICE OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

DECEMBER 18, 2022 10:30AM

Grace Notes

Welcome to WHPC! If you are visiting us today, we are so glad you joined us for worship. If you have not already, please take a moment to record your contact information on the visitor card you will find in the pew and drop it in the offering box or hand it to a greeter at the door. We are always glad to share the great things happening at WHPC!

If you are looking for a new church home and would like to join in fellowship with Westover Hills, please join us in the Parlor (outside the sanctuary doors) and we will gladly share more about life at WHPC or, if you are ready, receive you into membership.

Childcare is available in the nursery. Please check with a greeter.

WESTOVER HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Indicates the congregation is invited to stand.* **Bold text indicates unison readings.

WE GATHER AT GOD'S INVITATION

GATHERING MUSIC

David Austin, Music Director

WELCOME

& OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCIPLESHIP

The Reverend Dr. Robert Wm Lowry

OPENING PRAYER

God you have a surprising preference for people who are small and humble in the eyes of the world. You chose Mary, the unassuming young woman from Nazareth, to become the mother of your Son Jesus.

In Jesus, you presented your might and majesty to the world in the person of an innocent child, fully dependent on the care of his parents, fully vulnerable to the powers of the world.

Through your Holy Spirit make us humble of heart, that we may be open to you and welcome you, be ready, like Mary, to serve you and your plans, and be prepared to stand in the light of your grace now and forever more.

Come to us and give yourself to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHORAL INTROIT

"The Call"

George Herbert, Text

Ralph Vaughan Williams, Music

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life: such a way as gives us breath, such a truth as ends all strife, such a life as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength: such a light as shows a feast, such a feast as mends in length, such a strength as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart: such a joy as none can move, such a love as none can part, such a heart as joys in love.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE

Charlotte and Charlie Frith

O God, our life and our breath, the angels bear witness to your coming; in the humility of service, with the poor and marginalized, in the cries of the new born child, in the heart of each person we meet, and in the beauty of all creation.

Today we light the candle of love.

The candle is lit.

It is a reminder of both your love for us and your command that we love one another.

We hear the angels' chorus bearing witness to your coming.

We are waiting.

We are watching.

We are witnessing.

Grace Notes

The fourth verse of this modern hymn uses the imagery of a bright star to recall both the star that led the magi to Bethlehem and the light of Christ in the world.

In a world of ever growing darkness, the light of Christ is more important than ever to illumine both our lives and the path we follow in Christ through the anxieties of life.

Advent can be a season of impatience on our part. We want to skip right to Christmas without waiting for these four weeks.

Rather than seeing these weeks as a stumbling block before we reach the “big day,” perhaps we should think of Advent more like the wonderful scent that fills the house before a loaf of fresh baked bread emerges from the oven!

RESPONSE TO CANDLE LIGHTING “People, Look East”

1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing of the
 2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is plant - ed
 3 Birds, though you long have ceased to build, guard the nest that must be
 4 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim one more light the bowl shall

year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble; trim the hearth and set the
 there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish, that in course the flower may
 filled. E - ven the hour when wings are fro - zen God for fledg - ing time has
 brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er, bright as sun and moon to -

People, look east and sing to - day:

ta - ble. Love, the Guest, is on the way.
 flour - ish. Love, the Rose, is on the way.
 cho - sen. People, look east and sing to - day: Love, the Bird, is on the way.
 geth - er. Love, the Star, is on the way.

People look east (Love is on the way.)

CALL TO CONFESSION

Tom Callaway, Liturgist

Because it is so hard to wait, it is not easy to live through Advent’s days.

But watch what God does during this time. God waits for us to turn from our old ways to find the right paths; God waits for us to admit what we have done, and failed to do, so we might be forgiven and graced with new life.

Let us approach the One who waits— for us!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (UNISON)

**Merciful God,
 how many John the Baptists,
 how many prophets of your light,
 have we ignored
 because they were not what we were looking for?**

Grace Notes

How many times have we ignored voices
crying in the wilderness,
"Make straight the way of the Lord."
How many times have we breathed a sigh of relief,
and turned our backs on your messengers,
because they did not speak the message
we expected to hear?
Help us hear anew,
the cry of those who would lead us to Christ.
Tune our ears to your heralds,
that we might also testify to your light. Amen.

Silence is kept.

†SUNG RESPONSE "Angels We Have Heard on High" (Refrain)

"Gloria in excelsis Deo!" literally translates as "Glory to God in the highest!" This exclamation of the angels refers both to the traditional idea that heaven is a place "up there" where God resides and an acknowledgement that God sits on a throne above all earthly powers.

There is also a bit of subversion in the angels' song. "Gloria" is one of the four virtues of Roman aristocracy in the first century. By proclaiming God's glory "in the highest," the angels place God above even the most powerful in the empire.

Refrain

Glo - ri - a

in ex - cel - sis De - o! Glo -

- ri - a in ex - cel - sis De - o!

THE PEACE OF CHRIST

The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ which passes all understanding be with you all.
And also with you.

Grace Notes

In this passage, Matthew continues to set the stage for the birth of Jesus by demonstrating how his birth is in keeping with scripture.

In the first part of the book, Matthew lays out the genealogy of Jesus from creation to Joseph.

Because Matthew's audience was primarily Jewish, it was important for him to show the connection between Jesus and the patriarchs and matriarchs.

Like other material from oral traditions, this 19th-century African-American spiritual flourished without being written down.

The refrains are the most consistent part of songs like this. The verses may vary from community to community. These verses recall the nativity of Christ.

WE PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Matthew 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ took place.

When Mary his mother was engaged to Joseph, before they were married, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband was a righteous man. Because he didn't want to humiliate her, he decided to call off their engagement quietly.

As he was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child she carries was conceived by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will call him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Now all of this took place so that what the Lord had spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled:

*Look! A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,
And they will call him, Emmanuel.*

(Emmanuel means "God with us.")

When Joseph woke up, he did just as an angel from God commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he didn't have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son.

Joseph called him Jesus.

SERMON

"Mary, Me Too, and Trying to Making Sense"

Dr. Lowry

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

+HYMN OF RESPONSE #29 "Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

GO TELL IT

+AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in God, creator and lover of the earth, origin and destiny of us all.

We believe in Jesus the Christ—God coming to us in the fragile promise of a newborn baby—

who emerges as the herald of hope, God's laughter in the face of despair.

Plunged into death and hell, he broke free the captives, and is leading the way to the land of promise where justice and peace will flourish.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who implants the seed of truth, brings us to birth as the body of Christ, and empowers us to confront and transform all that is corrupt, degrading and deceitful.

We believe in the coming reign of God.

Announced by the Baptist, it has drawn near to us in Jesus, and will be consummated in the glorious marriage of earth and heaven, when all who have passed through the world's deep sorrow will be raised from the waters, robed in righteousness, and gathered into the joyous fulfilment of God's desire.

For the coming of that day on this day, we work and pray:

Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

Grace Notes

Written between 1845 and 1855 (the actual publication date is unknown), this Browning poem was written in three stanzas. The title speaks of God's act of love and the text speaks of the poet's faith, love, and respect for God.

The invitation to the table is extended to all God's children. No one who hears the invitation and comes to the table is ever to be turned away!

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

"God Thou Art Love"

Robert Browning, Text
Craig Courtney, Music

If I forget, yet God remembers.

*If these hands of mine cease from their clinging,
yet the hands divine hold me so firmly I cannot fall.*

*And if sometimes I am too tired to call for God to help me,
then God reads the prayer unspoken in my heart and lifts my care.*

*I dare not fear since certainly I know that I am in God's keeping,
shielded so, from all that else would harm and in the hour of stern
temptation, strengthened by God's power.*

I tread no path in life to God unknown;

I lift no burden, bear no pain alone;

my soul a calm, sure hiding place has found:

The everlasting Arms my life surround, God, Thou art love!

I build my faith on that. I know Thee who has kept my path.

*And made light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
so that it reached me like a solemn joy.*

It were too strange that I should doubt Thy love.

WE GATHER AT GOD'S TABLE

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

God's banquet is coming. The time we await when all will gather from North, East, West and South.

A banquet where the rich and powerful will sit with the weak and poverty-stricken. A table where young and old will learn from each other. A time when all will sit together in peace, "and the wolf will lie down with the lamb."

Here at this table we get a foretaste of God's banquet. This is indeed God's table, not the church's, and so all who seek to follow The Way are welcome to eat and drink from it.

Come and taste the grace eternal; come and see that God is good.

SURSUM CHORDA

God is with us

We are not alone

Christ is present here

The Spirit moves within us

Let us give thanks to God

In memory and in hope

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Blessings be to you, Creator God, who in the beginning brought light and life to the world and who continues to bring it love and light everlasting.

Grace Notes

In the sacrament, we are reminded of Jesus' ministry and his promises to the disciples on the night before his crucifixion.

Part of remembering Jesus is remembering all the promises that make up the story of his life and ministry. One of those is the story of his mother, Mary, a young woman who had the faith and courage to follow the angel's call and be the Theotokos or god-bearer.

Your song of wisdom echoes through the ages, your ancient promise still brings us hope.

Over the ages you have called people to embrace your hope and share your love. But even when they have closed their ears to the song you did not stop singing. You sent prophets and messengers to your people, reminding them of the promised time of peace and justice that would surround the world.

They came in the midst of our despair and filled us with hope.

And then you came to a young woman named Mary and laid out the promise in a new way

**Promising her a son, who would be called Jesus
Promising her that in her son the world would be changed**

And now as we prepare for that child to be born, we echo the ancient cry:

O come, O come Emmanuel.

Yet even now, as we prepare to celebrate his birth, we remember the life that this baby will live.

We remember how he broke the bonds of human tradition to show all what the Banquet of Hope could be as he ate openly with the despised and the outcast of his world.

And we remember one special meal, foretaste of the banquet that is to come, that he ate with his closest friends.

Gathering them together in an upper room to share the story of liberation, he prepared them for liberation.

And at the end of the meal he took bread, blessed and broke it, then passed it to them saying:

Take and eat. This bread is the body of Life, broken by the world. Eat it in remembrance and in hope.

After that he took the cup, blessed it, and passed it to them saying:

This cup is the sign of the New Covenant. Whenever you drink it, remember me, for I shall not eat or drink again until the time of the heavenly banquet.

Remembering the birth of the child in the stable, we remember also his life, his death and his resurrection.

We remember how he poured his love out on all he met and look forward to his return and the coming reign of peace, love, and justice.

God, you poured your Spirit on Mary and she sang words of defiance and hope. Pour out your Spirit upon us gathered here.

As we eat and drink may we know your presence.

As we eat and drink may we be opened to the possibilities of your hope and power and may we be strengthened in our time of waiting for peace and justice so that we will have the courage to make the Christmas promise a reality.

Amen.

Grace Notes

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.**

BREAKING THE BREAD

The Bread we break is the Bread of Life.
The Cup we Share is the Cup of Promise.
These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Come and eat, the banquet awaits.

THE COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION "Song of Mary"

Patricia Mock, Text
Faye Lopez, Music

*My soul exalts the Lord, my God, and my spirit rejoices in praise to God my Savior,
For God has chosen me, the handmaid of the Lord.
Age to age generations will call me blessed for the favor the Mighty One has shown to
their servant,
For God has honored me, the bond-slave of the Lord.
In God's goodness, God's kind compassion,
God sends the Promised One the vow to pay.
In remembrance of God's great mercy, The Holy One has done great things for me.
O magnify God's holy name.
My soul magnifies the Lord, my God, and my heart rejoices in praise to God my
Savior.
For God has chosen me, the bond-slave of the Lord. Amen.*

THE PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

WE DEPART IN GOD'S NAME

+PARTING HYMN #43 "O Little Town of Bethlehem" FORREST GREEN

+CHARGE & BENEEDICTION

+POSTLUDE

Elders will be in the Parlor (outside the sanctuary doors) following worship if you would like to learn more about WHPC or if you are ready to join as part of the congregation.

Announcements and pastoral care concerns may be found on the insert.

*Join us Tuesday at 5:30 pm for the Blue Christmas Service.
This prayer and reflection focused service is an opportunity for
healing and wholeness for those hurts that sometimes linger
during the holidays.*