

Sunday, December 24, 2023
Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love



GATHERING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

PRELUDE "Joy to the World" arr. Chris Rice

WELCOME

*WORDS OF BLESSING

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES The Layman Family

*HYMN #41 "O Come All Ye Faithful"

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of Promise, we often place our trust in the things we can see, and touch, and easily believe. You did not ask us to believe what is easy, you have asked us to believe what is true! Forgive us when we doubt the ways you work. Forgive us when we find it hard to believe an ancient story. Forgive us when we question how you chose to enter the world, born as one of us. Forgive us for our lack of faith. Forgive how we hold onto the Good News of Jesus for ourselves and forget to share it with others. [. . . Silence is kept as we pray our private confessions . . .] Help us see with faith, set aside our doubts and believe that you sent your Son – the one who has come to set us all free. Thank you, God, for hearing all our prayers. We offer them in the name of your Son, Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

HYMN #31 "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

*PRAYER OF READINESS

Long-awaited Savior, you are the promise of the prophets. We are witnesses to your arrival and your on-going mission in us and through us. As we wait for you again, enlighten and enliven us, send us out to live in your ways and spread your message so that all may see, hear, know and believe that you are the coming of God, the Messiah, now and forever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE Zephaniah 3:14-20

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON "The World Waits: We Prepare"
Scripture: Luke 1:39-55

RESPONDING AS GOD'S PEOPLE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

To share a joy or concern: Click [HERE](#) or use the QR code

OFFERING

To give online: Click [HERE](#), or use the QR code

MUSIC "When Hope Came Down" Maeve Courtney

*DOXOLOGY

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

GOING IN GOD'S NAME

*CHARGE AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE "Angels We Have Heard on High" arr. Chris Rice

Pastor Pat Smith, pat@erpc.org

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ADVENT WREATH AND CANDLES

In the ancient world, various peoples lit fires to mark the turning of the light into winter's season and to pray for the return of the light. The church has Christianized that practice in the lighting of the Advent wreath. To us, these candles are signs of the growing light of Christ who is coming again in all fullness into the darkness of our world. Until the dawning of that Great Day, we watch and wait in Holy Spirit for Christ's coming into the darkness of our world, lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love; and remembering the promises of God with prayer.

Budgeted Giving for 2023 \$503,000

Total received \$486,000 97% as of 12/19/2023.

Thank you for the 35 new pledges received to date for next year.