

Shepherd of the Hill Presbyterian Church USA

~ Christmas Eve ~

December 24, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.

(*) Please stand in body or in spirit.

Bold type indicates congregational response.

We acknowledge that our church is on the traditional homelands of the Puyallup Tribe. The Puyallup people have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time, and continue to do so today. We recognize that this land acknowledgment is one small step toward true allyship and we commit to uplifting the voices, experiences, and histories of the Indigenous people of this land and beyond.

The Prelude to Worship

Sheri Martin

Welcome

Rev. John Asher

Hymn # 41

“O Come, All Ye Faithful”
(Verses 1 & 2)

Lighting of the Christ Candle

The Saarela/Henderson Family

Today, we conclude our Advent Journey as we light the Christ Candle, welcoming the one promised in Scripture.

He is called Emmanuel: God with us!

We celebrate the hope brought to earth by our Wonderful Counselor.

He is called Emmanuel: God with us!

We rejoice in the strength and power of a Mighty God.

He is called Emmanuel: God with us!

We sing of peace on earth and good will to all people.

He is called Emmanuel: God with us!

And we lift our hearts in praise to our Everlasting Father.

He is called Emmanuel: God with us! Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

Lighting of the Candles

Hymn # 41

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"
(Verse 3)

Advent Prayer

Sharing Our Burdens Prayer

Dona Johnson

We were heavy with sorrow, **but joy interrupted.**
We were deep in the night, **but a star appeared.**
We were silent with sadness, **but the heavens rang.**
We were hardened by conflict, **but love intervened.**
We were frightened by shadows, **but light took them away.**
We were haunted by fears, **but a child brought us hope.**
We were arrogant and angry, **but his innocence disarmed us.**
We were cruel, crude, and clumsy, **but his grace made all things new.**
We were selfish, narrow, greedy, **but his joy we had to share.**
We were dismal and defeated, **but faith set us on fire.**
We were weary and complaining, **but our hearts discovered praise.**
We were strangers without a country, **but our kingdom came to us.**
We are sheep who have a shepherd, children who are loved unconditionally.
Let us remember what we so often forget, that God came to us, and is with us today.
Hallelujah! Amen.

* Hymn # 8

"Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"

Children's Message

Rev. John Asher

Following the message, children are to return to being seated their families.

Scripture

Luke 2: 1-20

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Sermon

"The Mystery & Hope of Christmas" *Rev. Gary E. Mathiesen*

Hymn # 31

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Communion

Rev. John Asher & Rev. Gary E. Mathiesen

As we celebrate communion, you are invited to come forward and to partake in the elements as you receive them. We seek to be inclusive in providing the sacrament. Therefore, we are offering communion in with these options:

Gluten-free crackers are in the glass bowls on the trays and available with any server.

For those who prefer to stay seated, please raise your hand and we will bring the elements to you. After the sanctuary is served, one set of servers will be departing to serve those in the nursery.

Special Music

"O Holy Night"

Joseph & Maria Bozich

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.

Prayer of the People

Rev. John Asher

God of our Salvation,

And provider of nourishment for our souls we come to you on this wondrous day to in praise, to lift up your name with friend, family, and stranger. In the beginning, your creative work began with a word, and today, your creation continues with the Word made flesh. In this holiest of seasons, we join the everlasting chorus saying:

Glory to God on highest! Great is your name in all the earth!

Like Mary, we ponder these things in our hearts, and wonder how you could love us so much as to actually become one of us, one with us. We remember these stories of this season that remind us of your steadfast love, that affirm that you have never, and will never, give up on your children.

Thank you for your steadfast presence in our lives!

And yet, even as we celebrate the fulfillment of love, we recognize that there are many who are still waiting for fulfillment:

the fulfillment of adequate food and shelter . . .

the fulfillment of peace and the end of violence . . .

the fulfillment of reprieve from the fierce grip of grief . . .

the fulfillment of a restoration of a broken relationship . . .

(Continued . . .)

the fulfillment of a renewing of heart, mind, or body . . .

the fulfillment of healing from a chronic illness . . .

the fulfillment of an end to substance abuse . . .

Giving God,

Give us the courage to do your work in the world and to share the peace coming to us in the manger.

We pray especially for those who have traveled to be here . . .

for those who have lost loved ones in the past year . . .

for those who struggle with mental illness . . .

for those who fight addiction's onslaught . . .

for those who will be traveling in the coming days and weeks . . .

for those who work on the holidays: especially medical workers, police, and emergency personnel . . .

for those who cannot make it home for Christmas . . .

Hear us, we pray, O God, restore us and make your face to shine that we might be saved.

In all that we do and in all that we are, send your Spirit to send us forward to share the grace and joy we find with everyone we encounter.

In Christ's name, Amen.

* Hymn # 40

"Joy to the World!"

* Benediction

Rev. Gary E. Mathiesen

Postlude

Attribution Notes:

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