

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
4th Sunday of Advent Christmas Eve morning

December 24th, 2023

Interim Minister: Rev. Dr. David Thompson

Music Director: Suzanne Strahan

* We continue to be mask friendly, but it is now a personal decision. Thank you.
** The offering can be placed in the offering plates at the back of the church in the narthex prior to it being brought forward.

PRELUDE:

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Advent Liturgy:

Voice 1: The prophets call and the psalmists sing to announce that God is love.

Voice 2: “For the mountain may depart and the hills may be moved, but my steadfast love shall never depart from you...and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you.” (Isaiah 54) “Give thanks to the LORD, who is good...give thanks to the Lord of lords, whose steadfast love endures forever.” (Psalm 136)

Voice 1: From the mystery of God’s love came our creation and we are nurtured daily by it. The power of God’s love is transformative; because we have received God’s love, we cannot remain the same. Love means seeking the best for others. Love is compassion for all creation. Love speaks the truth with kindness. Love is the way of seeing others as God sees them.

Voice 2: Holy are You, Source of all new life among us.

All: Jesus Christ is the love of God come into the world.

Voice 2: We join with all creation and lift our hearts in joyful praise.

All: We light this candle to burn for love. (while lighting the candle of love)
Sing verse 4 of #119 Hope is a star)

Responsive Call to Worship:

In the beginning was the Word.

And the Word was with God and the Word was God.

In the Word was light.

And the light was the life of all people.

The light shines in the darkness.

And the darkness has not overcome it.

So let us worship God in wonder and in love, trusting in God's light.

Carol: #144 T'was in the moon of wintertime verses 1,2 and 4.

PRAYER OF APPROACH (*together*)

God of mystery and mercy,

You stir in our hearts and bring us love

You stir in our minds and bring us wisdom.

You stir in the world and bring hope for the future.

You came as a little child, stirring up joy

So we come to adore You with the angels;

to bow with the shepherds;

to kneel in wonder with the magi;

to ponder Your mystery with Joseph;

to love and cherish You with Mary;

We come with humble hearts full of love

because You came to us in Jesus,

whom we hold in our hearts this day. Amen

PRAYER OF CONFESSION: (*together*)

God of grace and truth,

In Christ You offer us the gift of Yourself,

You came to us in our humanity,

but we fail to see You in the humans right beside us.

You shine in the world,

but we dwell on the darkness in the daily news.

Forgive us and deliver us.

**Renew our hope and our trust in You,
as you reached out to us from the manger so long ago, yet still are present
with us, be with us this Christmas Eve and bring us to Joy!**

Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: (Minister)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light! Let us walk in the assurance of God's grace and forgiveness. Then we can be people of The Light forgiving ourselves and loving everyone, as Jesus did.

PASSING OF THE PEACE:

Leader: The Peace of Christ be with you

Congregation: And also with you.

(Please turn and greet one another)

Anthem

STORY:

HYMN: #160 Unto us a child is born (all verses.)

SCRIPTURE READING:

St Matthew 1:18-25

St Matthew 2: 1-12

Anthem

SERMON: "On Christmas Eve"

OFFERTORY:

- 830 - Praise God from whom all blessings flow

PRAYER OF DEDICATION ((together)

Generous and loving God, your gift to us in Christ Jesus still draws us to the manger and opens our hearts with wonder. Bless our gifts in his name, so that they may draw others to your love, to find the blessing we have discovered in the One born for us all. Amen.

Report from the birthplace of Jesus:

With global headlines dominated since Oct. 7 by news of the Hamas attacks in southern Israel, followed by Israel's military assault on Gaza and a rise in violence in the West Bank, [business owners in Bethlehem](#) said no one was coming.

"We have no guests. Not one," said Joey Canavati, owner of the Alexander Hotel, whose family has lived and worked in Bethlehem for four generations.

"This is the worst Christmas ever. Bethlehem is shut down for Christmas. No Christmas tree, no joy, no Christmas spirit," he said.

PRAYER of Intercession (Minister and Congregation together)

In this time of quiet and contemplation we remember:

**people and families living close to the edge of survival,
worrying about where their next meal will come from,
or where they will find shelter...**

those who will spend Christmas alone, in hospital, or weighed down by grief...

those who work tonight and tomorrow today while we celebrate or relax...

those who have lost their sense of joy and wonder and turned to cynicism or despair;

those who face the year ahead with fear and anxiety,

those who celebrate the birth of a new life, a new love, or a new way of being...

those whom we have loved and who loved us, who now dwell in the eternal joy of your presence...

In deep gratitude for all the gifts of this life, we gather our voices and pray the prayer that the child of Bethlehem taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Carol: #139 Hark the herald angels sing (all verses)

Benediction

POSTLUDE: