



# THE PROMISE OF ADVENT

**St. John United Church of Christ - Bellevue KY**

**December 13, 2020**

***“Set free our captive hearts.”***

**-Psalm 126.4**

## **Welcome to St. John**

Keith M. Haithcock

## **Preparation Music**

Theo Baldwin & Steve Phillips, piano duet

*“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” -arr. Molly Ijames*

## **Centering Prayer**

Keith M. Haithcock

Shine your light upon us, O God, as we seek to be enlightened.

By your Spirit, open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts  
as we prepare for the coming of your Child. Amen.

## **Opening Song** (sung twice)

Jennie Malone, vocalist; Steve Milloy, piano

*“Waiting for You” -Christopher Grundy*

We are waiting for you, knowing that you always abide,  
we are waking to your presence and our hearts are open wide,  
open wide, open wide.

## **Prayer of Confession**

Keith M. Haithcock

**Holy One, we acknowledge that we often fail to see the thousands of ways you reveal yourself to us every day. We have not called on you, and we have not listened for your call to us. We have become tiny islands of self-concern. We long to be transformed by your grace and to come home.**

## **Assurance of God’s Grace**

Be assured children of God, that God’s grace overflows for you and the whole world!  
Amen.

## **The Candles of Advent – Love**

Sue Jelinek

As we gather around the Advent candles today, we rejoice that Christmas is a time of prayer and of open hearts when we sing songs of joy. Christmas is a time of worship – the moment when the busiest of us pause in wonder. Christmas happens

when God comes to us in love through Jesus Christ and fills us with love for all humankind.

We light the candles to proclaim the coming of the Holy Light into the world. With the coming of this Light there is love. Such great love helps us to love God and one another.

## Advent Hymn

Jennie Malone, vocalist; Mark Behnken, organ

“Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn”

Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning,  
sing out your joy, for Jesus is born, behold! the Child of our longing.  
Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together,  
to open wide the heavenly door, and lives now inside us forever.

To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emmanuel comes a-singing,  
whose humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing.  
Music to heal the broken soul and hymns of loving kindness,  
the thunder of the anthems roll to shatter all hate and injustice.

In deepest night Christ's coming shall be, when all the world is despairing,  
as morning light so quiet and free, so warm and gentle and caring.  
One without voice breaks forth in song, a lame one leaps in wonder,  
the weak are raised above the strong, and weapons are broken asunder.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, though cold the winter and cheerless,  
the rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless;  
Love be our song and love our prayer, and love, our endless story,  
may God fill every day we share, and bring us at last into glory.

## Prayers of the People

Sue Jelinek

One: Watching and waiting for the coming of Christ, we pray for the promise of a new creation, saying: Come quickly, Promised One;

**All: our love is in you.**

One: With expectation, we pray for the church . . . Anoint us with the gift of your Spirit that we may feed the hungry and proclaim good news to the poor.  
Come quickly, Promised One;

**All: our love is in you.**

One: With expectation, we pray for the world . . . Use us in your work to heal the brokenhearted, grant freedom to those who are held captive, and bring liberation to those who are in prison. Come quickly, Promised One;

**All: our love is in you.**

One: With expectation, we pray for this community . . . Be present in abandoned and forgotten neighborhoods, places where mourning overshadows joy and healthy food is hard to find. Come quickly, Promised One;

**All: our love is in you.**

One: With expectation, we pray for loved ones . . . (name out loud). Remembering your commandment to love, we pray for our enemies and those who trouble us, as well as those whose presence in our lives brings us joy. Come quickly, Promised One;

**All: our love is in you.**

One: God our hope, as the promised day approaches, fill us with the love of your Holy Spirit and strengthen us to serve you faithfully through Christ.

**All: Amen.**

## **Mission Moment**

The Christmas Fund

Video

The Christmas Fund special offering will be collected during the month of December. Send your check payable to St. John United Church of Christ with "Christmas Fund" in the Memo, or give online at [StJohnChurch.net](http://StJohnChurch.net) and designate your offering to The Christmas Fund.

## **An Offering of Music and our Gifts**

St. John / Christ Church combined Ensembles

*"I Will Sing Joy"-John Moysen & Steve Milloy*

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**Thank you for your financial support to the mission and ministry of the Church!**

**US mail: 520 Fairfield Ave., Bellevue, KY 41073; Online: [StJohnChurch.net](http://StJohnChurch.net)**

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## **Psalm 126**

Richard Robbins

When the Lord changed Zion's circumstances for the better, it was like we had been dreaming. Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter; our tongues were filled with joyful shouts.

It was even said, at that time, among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them!"

Yes, the Lord has done great things for us, and we are overjoyed.

Lord, change our circumstances for the better, like dry streams in the desert waste! Let those who plant with tears reap the harvest with joyful shouts.

Let those who go out, crying and carrying their seed, come home with joyful shouts, carrying bales of grain! (CEB)

One: Here ends the reading inspired by God.

May God grant to us wisdom and courage for interpretation.

All: Amen.

## Children's Couch Church

Sarah, Anthony, Adeline, and Eliza Palm

## Sermon

"SET FREE"

Keith M. Haithcock

## Song of Response (sung twice)

Jennie Malone, vocalist; Steve Milloy, piano

"There Is Peace" -*Maureen Jenci Shelton & Jill Hendrix*

There is peace, there is hope, and it's not so far away.

There is peace, there is hope, and it's not so far away.

Focus your light within us. Focus your peace through us. Focus your love.

Shine, shine, shine, shine, shine.

## Send Out

Keith M. Haithcock

## Going Forth

Mark Behnken

"Christians, Carol Sweetly" -*Traditional German carol, arr. Dr. Mark H. Behnken*

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