



THE PROMISE OF ADVENT

St. John United Church of Christ - Bellevue KY

December 20, 2020

“Set free our captive hearts.”

-Psalm 126.4

Welcome to St. John

Keith M. Haithcock

Preparation Music

St. John Handbell Choir

"What Wondrous Love is This" -arr. Matthew Prins

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)

Melissa Stephens, 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 – Joy

Sue Jelinek

Soon we shall celebrate the birth of Jesus. We worship God with joy in our hearts as we are reminded of the words the angel said on that first Christmas Day: “Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people.”

We light the candles to proclaim the coming of the Holy Light into the world. With the coming of this Light there is joy, joy that is ours not only at Christmas but always.

Advent Hymn

Melissa Stephens, vocalist; Mark Behnken, organ

"My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise"

My heart sings out with joyful praise to God who raises me,
Who came to me when I was low and changed my destiny.
The Holy One, the Living God, is always full of grace
To those who seek their Maker's will in every time and place.

The arm of God is strong and just to scatter all the proud.
The tyrants tumble from their thrones and vanish like a cloud.
The hungry all are satisfied; the rich are sent away.
The poor of earth who suffer long will welcome God's new day.

The promise made in ages past at last has come to be,
for God has come in power to save, to set all people free.
Remembering those who wait to see salvation's dawning day,
Our Savior comes to all who weep to wipe their tears away.

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 joy is in you.

One: With expectation, we pray for the church . . . Fill our mouths with the song of your unending love. May we never stop proclaiming your faithfulness from one generation to another. Come quickly, Promised One;

All: our joy is in you.

One: With expectation, we pray for the world . . . Come and dwell among all the people of the world. As you made your home with your people in ancient times, make your home among us now. Come quickly, Promised One;

All: our joy is in you.

One: With expectation, we pray for this community . . . By your power at work in us, use us to bring healing and freedom, liberation and comfort, and to share the good news that you walk in our streets. Come quickly, Promised One;

All: our joy is in you.

One: With expectation, we pray for loved ones . . . (name out loud) Remember those who are hurting or searching. Even when they feel that all is lost hold their desires and dreams in your heart. Come quickly, Promised One;

All: our joy is in you.

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

All: Amen.

Mission Moment

Lighthouse Youth & Family Services

St. John United Church of Christ supports this and other social service agencies.

Lighthouse Youth and Families Services includes LGBTQ youth and families.

Funding is provided by the Pastor's Discretionary Assistance Fund (PDAF).

Your gifts in action for youth and families. Thank you!

An Offering of Music and our Gifts

The St. John Ensemble featuring Saba Smith

"My Soul Does Magnify the Lord" -Phillips & Mason/arr. Dave Williamson

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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

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Luke 1.26-38

Richard Robbins

When Elizabeth was six months pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a city in Galilee, to a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David's house. The virgin's name was Mary. When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen since I haven't had sexual relations with a man?"

The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the one who is to be born will be holy. He will be called God’s Son. Look, even in her old age, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son. This woman who was labeled ‘unable to conceive’ is now six months pregnant. Nothing is impossible for God.”

Then Mary said, “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with me just as you have said.”
Then the angel left her. (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

"DELIVERANCE"

Keith M. Haithcock

Song of Response (sung twice)

Melissa Stephens, 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, organ

"Nöel Angevin" -*César Frank*

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