



THE PROMISE OF ADVENT

St. John United Church of Christ - Bellevue KY

December 6, 2020

“Set free our captive hearts.”

-Psalm 126.4

Welcome to St. John

Keith M. Haithcock

Preparation Music

Mark Behnken, organ

“Breath of Heaven/Lo, How a Rose” -Amy Grant & Chris Eaton, arr. Dr. Mark H. Behnken

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)

Stephanie Dalsfoist, 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.

The Candles of Advent – Peace

Sue Jelinek

We gather around the Advent candles today knowing that we are not perfect – that we all make mistakes and do bad things. Only Jesus obeyed God fully. Jesus helps us to live as God wants us to live. Jesus gives us peace.

We light the candles to proclaim the coming of the Holy Light into the world. With the coming of this Light there is peace, for Christ is called the “Prince of Peace.” Christ’s name is also Emmanuel, “God with us.” The presence of Christ with us gives us peace day by day.

Advent Hymn

Stephanie Dalsfoist, vocalist; Mark Behnken, organ

"All Earth Is Waiting"

All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,
and open furrows, the sowing of our God.

All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;
It cries out for justice and searches for the truth.

Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,
“A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel”:
One whose name is “God with us,” our Savior shall be,
Through whom hope will blossom once more within our hearts.

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 peace is in you.

One: With expectation, we pray for the church . . . May we hear the word your messengers speak, so that we can change our hearts and actions and live faithful lives. Come quickly, Promised One;

All: our peace is in you.

One: With expectation, we pray for the world . . . Speak peace to your people so that we might become your peace. Don't let us return to foolish ways. Come quickly, Promised One;

All: our peace is in you.

One: With expectation, we pray for this community . . . May your steadfast love and truth meet in this place and righteousness and peace embrace in our streets, so that all in our community will flourish. Come quickly, Promised One;

All: our peace is in you.

One: With expectation, we pray for loved ones . . . (name out loud). As you know the needs and hopes of each person, bring comfort to all who are mourning or anxious. Let us hear the compassionate words you speak. Come quickly, Promised One;

All: our peace is in you.

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

All: Amen.

An Offering of Music and our Gifts Christ Church / St. John Combined Ensemble *"Prepare the Way of the Lord" -William Rowan*



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

Isaiah 40.1-11

Richard Robbins

Comfort, comfort my people! Says your God. Speak compassionately to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended, that her penalty has been paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins!

A voice is crying out: "Clear the Lord's way in the desert! Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God!

Every valley will be raised up, and every mountain and hill will be flattened. Uneven ground will become level, and rough terrain a valley plain. The Lord's glory will appear, and all humanity will see it together; the Lord's mouth has commanded it."

A voice was saying: "Call out!"

And another said, "What should I call out?"

All flesh is grass; all its loyalty is like the flowers of the field.

The grass dries up and the flower withers when the Lord's breath blows on it. Surely the people are grass.

The grass dries up; the flower withers, but our God's word will exist forever.

God up on the high mountain, messenger Zion!

Raise your voice and shout, messenger Jerusalem!

Raise it; don't be afraid; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

Here is the Lord God, coming with strength, with a triumphant arm, bringing his reward with him and his payment before him. Like a shepherd, God will tend the flock; he will gather lambs in his arms and lift them onto his lap. He will gently guide the nursing ewes. (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

"COMFORT"

Keith M. Haithcock

Song of Response (sung twice)

Stephanie Dalsfoist, vocalist; Steve Milloy, piano

"There Is Peace" -*Maureen Jenci Shelton and 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.

Holy Communion

Invitation

Sue Jelinek

The prophets foretold it: the desert burst into bloom.
Angelic messengers delivered news:
a priest lost his speech; a young woman found her voice.
In this season of Advent, the scriptures revive old stories
and bring new understandings.
In the face of critics and skeptics,
our faith cries out, resilient,
like a baby from a manger bed.
From that Bethlehem beginning,
Jesus, baptized in the Jordan, spent his life serving others
that all might know the compassionate attention of a loving God.
Today, Jesus serves us yet again,
as we gather at this Table he prepares for us.

Unison Communion Prayer

**Dear Jesus of Advent,
You remain a sacred mystery to us.
You have brought Good News for all the people
and we will not be afraid, for you are here.
We are hungry for your love
which surpasses all our understanding;
we are thirsty for your spirit that never runs dry.
In this meal nourish our souls,
feed our minds, quench our deepest longings and
forgive our transgressions,
that we may glorify you every day of our lives. Amen.**

Blessing of the Bread and Cup

Consecrate, therefore, by your Holy Spirit, these gifts of bread and wine, and bless us that as we receive them at this table, we may offer you our faith and praise, we may be united with Christ and with one another, and we may continue faithful in all things.

In the strength Christ give us, we offer ourselves to you, eternal God, and give thanks that you have called us to serve you. Amen.

Sharing the Meal

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

Holy Creator, Bread of Life, Everlasting Salvation,
A light shines in the night and the night will not overcome it.
In this meal we have been replenished and strengthened,
the light of your love rekindled within.
We will be bold to carry this light into the world.
Thank you for recharging our batteries
and reviving your ambient glow within us.
You are the power source that never gives out
- eternally renewable and sustainable.
Thank you Creator Christ Spirit: Holy One. Amen.

Parting Hymn

Stephanie Dalsfoist, vocalist; Mark Behnken, organ

"All Earth Is Waiting"

Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain;
Open new highways, new highways for our God,
Who is now coming closer, so come all and see,
And open the doorways as wide as wide can be.

In lowly stable the Promised One appeared,
Yet feel that presence throughout the earth today,
For Christ lives in all Christians and is with us now;
Again, on arriving Christ brings us liberty.

Send Out

Keith M. Haithcock

Going Forth

Steve Milloy, piano

"Soon and Very Soon"-*Andraé Crouch/arr. Mark Hayes*

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