

The Third Sunday of Advent

December 13, 2020 at 10:30 AM

We welcome you to worship today. It is a privilege to have you as our guest.

As you join us today, begin to worship quietly with personal prayer.

Please turn off your cell phone and turn your hearts and minds toward God.

We prepare for worship

Take a moment and meditate on this as you prepare for worship...

The true Christian religion is incarnational and thus does not begin at the top, as all other religions do; it begins at the bottom. You must run directly to the manger and the mother's womb, embrace the Infant and Virgin's Child in your arms and look at Him—born, being nursed, growing up, going about in human society, teaching, dying, rising again, ascending above all the heavens, and having authority over all things.

Martin Luther

Prelude
Wickham

Mrs. Wendy

Aisquith Life and Opportunities

We praise our great God

Call to Worship

Today we light *the candle of love* because we know that Jesus is love, and he teaches us how to love each other. In John's gospel we read: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." **(4:7)**

Dear God, we love you because we know that in Jesus you loved us first. As we light this candle, make us love each other more and more, and help us to tell about the love of Jesus to the whole world. Amen.

The Lighting of the Advent Wreath

We light this candle as a symbol of Christ's Love, which has come into the world.

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;

From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,

Dear Desire of ev'ry nation, joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Joy to those who long to see thee, Dayspring from on high, appear;

Come, thou promised Rod of Jesse, of thy birth we long to hear!

O'er the hills the angels singing news, glad tidings of a birth:

"Go to him, your praises bringing; Christ the Lord has come to earth."

Come to earth to taste our sadness, he whose glories knew no end;

By his life he brings us gladness, our Redeemer, Shepherd, Friend.

Leaving riches without number, born within a cattle stall;

This the everlasting wonder, Christ was born the Lord of all.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,

Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;

By thine all sufficient merit, raise us to thy glorious throne.

We embrace Christ our Savior

Confession of Sin (unison)

Psalm 130 (ESV)

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Assurance of Pardon

Isaiah 54:8; 43:25; 44:22 (ESV)

In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you . . . I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sin . . . I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me for I have redeemed you.

Confession of Faith (unison)

Belgic Confession, Art.17.1

We believe that our most gracious God, in His admirable wisdom and goodness, seeing that [Adam by his disobedience] had thus thrown himself into temporal and spiritual death, and made himself wholly miserable, was pleased to seek and comfort him when he trembling fled from his presence, promising him that He would give His Son, who should be *made of a woman, to bruise the head of the serpent*, and would make him happy.

Hymn No. 211

God Rest You Merry Gentlemen

English melody

God rest you merry, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay,
Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas day,
To save us all from Satan's pow'r when we were gone astray;
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.
From God our heavenly Father, a blessed angel came;
And unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same;
How that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by name.
"Fear not, then," said the angel, "let nothing you affright,

this day is born a Savior of a pure virgin bright,
to free all those who trust in him from Satan's pow'r and might."

The shepherds at those tidings rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a feeding, in tempest, storm and wind:
And went to Bethlehem straightway, the Son of God to find.

The Prayers of God's People and the Lord's Prayer (**in unison**)

We respond in gratitude for God's blessing

The Doxology (Hymnal, pg. 731) and Prayer of Dedication

We hear God speak

Scripture Reading

Genesis 12:1-3, 10-20 (**ESV**)

12 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. ¹¹ When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, ¹² and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³ Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." ¹⁴ When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶ And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

¹⁷ But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸ So Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go." ²⁰ And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

Sermon

"The Triumph of Grace over a Faithless Cause"

Pastor Bell

We respond to God's grace

Hymn No. 198 (**vv. 1-4**)

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates!

Truro

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of glory waits;

The King of kings is drawing near, the Savior of the world is here.

A helper just he comes to thee, his chariot is humility,

His kingly crown is holiness, his scepter, pity in distress.

O blest the land, the city blest, where Christ the Ruler is confessed!

O happy hearts and happy homes to whom this King in triumph comes!

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart

From earthly use for heav'n's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Benediction and Three-Fold Amen (**Hymnal, pg 740**)

Danish

Postlude

We Welcome and Thank Mrs. Wendy Wickham for providing the musical accompaniment today.

The Maryland State Boychoir will NOT be holding their Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, they are producing a recording drawn from past years which will be broadcast on WBJC 91.5 on Saturday, December 19th and Wednesday, December 23rd. It will also be available for purchase as a CD

We will have a Christmas Eve service at 7:00 PM on Thursday, December 24th.