

Community Presbyterian Church  
open hearted, open minded



**December 10, 2023**  
**Second Sunday of Advent**

Welcome to worship this morning!

Bulletin Cues: **Bold** indicates congregational response, \* indicates please stand, if able

## *Comfort, O Comfort*

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Isaiah 40:1-11

Digital painting

I wanted to create an image that spoke tenderly to the viewer as this text does to the reader. “Comfort, O comfort my people” (Isaiah 40:1). When I’ve read this text before, the shepherding metaphor has only yielded masculine imagery in my mind. It makes sense with the text’s pronouns that I would imagine a masculine figure. It was also ingrained in me— through translations, biblical art, movies, children’s pageants, etc.—that shepherds were always men. I learned recently, however, that women were shepherds too. Some young women were trained and worked as shepherds before they were married; this notion completely added new dimension and depth to the shepherding metaphor. I decided to use imagery of modern-day shepherds to inspire this image. A shepherd is at once fierce and tender, willing to face the most dangerous of predators in the dead of night while warmly cradling the most vulnerable of the flock.



In this image, the shepherd nurtures a lamb while leading the flock through fields of tall grasses and flowers. The fuschia flowers in the foreground are marjoram flowers that represent comfort and the steadfastness of God’s word even in the midst of the leveling of the land. The shepherd’s clothes have repeated medallions with simplified imagery of a straight highway in the wilderness. Within the stylized landscape, a voice proclaims the coming glory of the Lord. —*Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman*

# WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## PRELUDE

### \*CALL TO WORSHIP

Family of faith, one of the greatest joys of worship is that it is not a solo act. We gather together. We find joy, and God, in the act of connection. So as we begin our worship, I invite you to turn and face someone you are close to so that you can see one another. (Pause as people get in position.) Now repeat these phrases after me:

Welcome to worship. **Welcome to worship.**

I am glad you're here. **I am glad you're here.**

Surely God is in this space. **Surely God is in this space.**

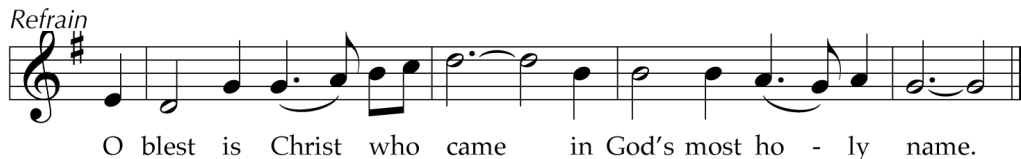
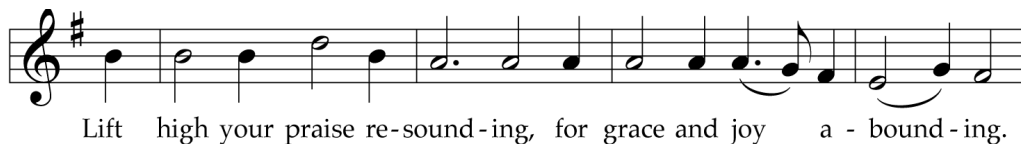
I see God in your face. **I see God in your face.**

Let us worship together. **Let us worship together.**

## OPENING HYMN GTG 106

## Prepare the Way, O Zion

verse 2



## ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

How does a weary world practice peace?

**By listening before we speak and saying  
sorry when we need to.**

By advocating for justice and caring for  
our neighbor. By practicing Sabbath and  
forgiving seventy times seven.

**By choosing grace over hate and opening  
the door for each other.**

There are a million ways to practice peace.  
So today we light the candle of peace as a  
reminder and a charge.

**With God's help, may we bring peace  
into a weary world. Amen.**

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Family of faith, one of the ways we find joy in a weary world is through connection. The prayer of confession is a place of connection with God. In the prayer of confession we get to come before God with our full, messy, honest selves. And in the midst of that mess, God tells us that we are loved, claimed, and forgiven. There is no greater joy than that. So join me in the prayer of confession, not because you have to, but because you can. Let us connect with our merciful God.

God of laughter,  
God of open front doors  
and family reunions,  
we confess that we often doubt good news.

**We move through this world  
waiting for the other shoe to drop,  
waiting for life to fall apart,  
waiting for our humanity to get the best of us.**

Instead of leaning into joy,  
we lean into scarcity.

**We lean into fear.**

**We lean into isolation.**

Forgive us for forgetting that joy is amplified when shared.

**Heal the wounds we have from past hurts,  
and teach us how to throw open our doors like Elizabeth.  
Show us how to find joy in connection.  
Amen.**

Faith family, I imagine that when we come before God with the truth of our lives, God meets us like Elizabeth meets Mary in our scripture today. The door is thrown open. There is laughter. There is joy. There is embracing—and it is holy. So trust this; believe this: You are claimed. You are loved. You are forgiven. And you are sent to serve. Find joy in that. Amen!

### LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

#### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God, We know that you are near. We know that you are standing at the door, you are running down the driveway, you are inviting us in— into your Word, into relationship, and deeper into joy. So as we approach your Word, O God, we pray: do not let us pass you by. Do not allow distraction or doubt to get the best of us. Do not let us walk down this road without you. Instead, give us the wisdom to turn and run your way. Give us the wisdom to hear your wisdom, to let it sink into our bones and change us. With hope and gratitude we pray, Amen.

#### RESPONSIVE READING                      Isaiah 40:1–11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

**Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her  
that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.**

A voice cries out:

**“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;  
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

**Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,  
and all flesh shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”**

A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?"

**All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field.**

The grass withers; the flower fades,  
when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.

**The grass withers; the flower fades,  
but the word of our God will stand forever.**

Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength,

**O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, do not fear;  
say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"**

See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him;  
his reward is with him and his recompense before him.

**He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms  
and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep.**

SPECIAL MUSIC

*I Wonder as I Wander*

Brian and Carla Nelson

GOSPEL READING

Luke 1: 24-45

After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, "This is what the Lord has done for me in this time, when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.



In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

Heaven and earth will pass away but the word of the Lord stands forever.

**Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

Pastor Carla

### RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE

\*HYMN OF THE DAY GTG 98

To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary

vs. 1,2,4,6



1 To a maid whose name was Mar - y, the an - gel Ga-briel came.  
2 "For you are high - ly fa - vored by God the Lord of all,  
4 "Fear not, for God is with you, and you shall bear a child.  
6 As Mar-y heard the an - gel, she won-dered at his words.



"Fear not," the an - gel told her, "I come to bring good news;  
who e - ven now is with you. You are on earth most blest;  
His name shall be called Je - sus, God's off-spring from on high.  
"Be - hold, I am your hand-maid," she said un - to her God.



good news I come to tell you, good news, I say, good news."  
you are most blest, most bless - ed; God chose you, you are blest!"  
And he shall reign for - ev - er, for - ev - er reign on high."  
"So be it; I am read - y ac - cord - ing to your word."

## JOYS AND CONCERNS/PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God, our Savior, **hear our prayer.**

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father and Mother in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

**Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;**

**and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;**

**and let us not be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen**

### SENDING INTO THE WORLD TO LOVE AND SERVE

\*CLOSING HYMN GTG 88 O Come, Come Emmanuel

*vs. 1,2,3,5*

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear.**

*Refrain:*

**Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

**2 O come, thou Wisdom from on high,  
who orderest all things mightily:  
to us the path of knowledge show;  
and teach us in her ways to go. [Refrain]**

**3 O come, O come, thou Lord of might,  
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times didst give the law  
in cloud and majesty and awe. [Refrain]**

**5 O come, thou Key of David, come,  
and open wide our heavenly home;  
make safe the way that leads on high,  
and close the path to misery. [Refrain]**

### \*CHARGE AND BLESSING

Family of faith, as you leave this place,  
you go into a weary world—so speak tenderly.

Do the good that is yours to do.

Choose connection. Hold onto hope.

And remember that Christ took on flesh for you.

You are God's beloved. So go rejoicing.

The world needs it.

**Amen. Thanks be to God!**

### POSTLUDE



During Advent, daily messages are available “to expand and deepen your spiritual walk through Advent towards Christmas.” You can pick up a devotional beginning Advent I (December 3). Another option is to receive daily messages via text. Please see the information below about signing up for texts/notifications. There are also different daily messages on Facebook. Check it out!



Pick a way to receive messages for Daily Texts:

A) If you have a smartphone, get push notifications. On your iPhone or Android phone, open your web browser and go to the following link: [rmd.at/ga2hfb](http://rmd.at/ga2hfb) Follow the instructions to sign up for Remind. You'll be prompted to download the mobile app.

B) If you don't have a smartphone, get text notifications. Text the message @ga2hfb to the number 81010. If you're having trouble with 81010, try texting @ga2hfb to (608)467-4108. Note: you'll be asked if you are a student (s) or a parent (p). Choose either one. The application was designed for schools, but will work for our purposes.

If you received daily texts in the past, you're likely still on the list and you don't need to re-sign up.

\* Standard text message rates apply.

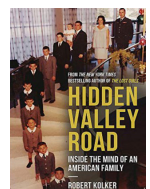
CPC is collecting gift cards and monetary donations for Gage East residents, both children and adults. Target and Walmart gift cards worth \$25 are preferred, but other donations will be accepted. The deadline was extended to today, Sunday, December 10.



A Christmas party for Gage East residents will be held from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, December 13th. Volunteers are needed to help serve food and coordinate activities. To volunteer, please contact Mark Neville or Sherrie Wilson.



The book discussion group will read and discuss *Hidden Valley Road* by Robert Kolker for the December book group. The discussion will take place on Sunday, December 17th following worship.



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## Sunday, December 10 Advent II

**9:30 am** Worship - Onsite and Online

2:30 pm Building Usage: Labranza de Dios

## Monday, December 11

9:30 am Mission Prayer Group

6:00 pm Building Usage: Med City Tai Chi

## Tuesday, December 12

12:00 pm Bulletin Information Due

6:30 pm Building & Grounds Committee

7:00 pm Building Use: Mission Aid Network

## Wednesday, December 13

6:30 am Prayer Group at CPC

5:30 pm Gage East Christmas Party

## Thursday, December 14

5:30 pm Building Usage: Labranza de Dios

## Sunday, December 17 Advent III

**9:30 am** Worship - Onsite and Online

**10:40 am** Book Discussion Group

2:30 pm Building Usage: Labranza de Dios



Judy Leal

Jane and Ed Burgstaler family,  
especially daughter Jenny

Connie Holst

Vera Atkinson's daughter, Teresa

Shannon Cisewski

Ron Murray

Dick and Nancy Massaro

Nellie Brovold's mother, Jacqueline

Glenna Muir's sister, Annie

Mary Alice Richardson and family

*To be added to the prayer list,  
please contact the office via email:  
office@cpchester.org.*

*Emergency Pastoral Support:*

*Rev. Carla Nelson: 507-254-1254*

### Church Staff

|                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Bridge Pastor  | Rev. Carla Nelson |
| Pianist        | Glenna Muir       |
| Custodian      | Nancy Sanford     |
| Office Manager | Stephanie Pasch   |

### Serving in Worship Today

|               |                        |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Liturgist     | Sue Chipman            |
| Special Music | Carla and Brian Nelson |
| IT Support    | Louis Bouchard         |