

Community Presbyterian Church
open hearted, open minded



December 17, 2023
Third Sunday of Advent

Welcome to worship this morning!

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

Watercourses

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Psalm 126

Oil paint, charcoal, and copper leaf on canvas



This painting is a meditation on the holy watercourses of the Negeb and all of the metaphors within that image. I painted with oil paint, charcoal, and copper leaf on canvas; the copper represents joy in our weary world.

For God, we are weary and we see no end to the weariness. Lament with us. Holy One, you are steadfast in your love like the watercourses of the Negeb. In your name, we call out evil. When we do, we are glimmers of hope. By your example, we act in the ways of Jesus. When we do, we are shimmers of joy. We often fall short; forgive us. We strive on, for when we succeed, your new heaven shines through. Strive with us.

Mother God, in this time of ascending fear, how do we stay aware of the needs of the world, active toward the renewal of your people, and focused on the specifics that are in your control through your call to us? Keep awake with us.

Adonai, it is in your name that we give ourselves time to lament. With you, we cry together. When our ancestors emerged from exile, by the rivers of Babylon, we sat down, and there we wept when we remembered Zion. The power of nostalgia—is it getting in the way of your work? Cry with us.

Holy Wisdom, we allow ourselves to be amazed, to dream, to lean into your call to garner your gifts the way raindrops become creeks and creeks become coursing rivers. We challenge ourselves to see the glimmers of hope in the murky waters of our current time. We beg you for clarity, but no, you continue to show us the way through subtle nudges, not obvious signs. We must flow on in endless song. How can we keep from singing? Perhaps our tears and our songs are one. Sing with us.

Holy Word, may our actions match your call, your claim on our lives. May we come together in our lament to sow the change your justice calls forth. Sow with us, we pray, that our next generation may reap our tears with shouts of joy. Amen. —*Hannah Garrity*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Our God can part the sea.

**God can bring water from a rock,
and provide bread in the desert.**

Our God can walk on water.

**He can heal the sick,
and turn water into wine.**

Our God sets the stars in the sky.

**God hears our voice when we cry,
and is closer than our own breath.**

There is nothing our God cannot do.

Let us stand in awe. Let us worship God with wonder.

OPENING HYMN GTG 106

Prepare the Way, O Zion

verse 2

3 Fling wide your gates, O Zi - on; your Sav - ior's rule em - brace,

and ti - dings of sal - va - tion pro-claim in ev - ery place.

All lands will bow re - joic - ing, their ad - o - ra - tion voic - ing.

Refrain

O blest is Christ who came in God's most ho - ly name.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

Bruce Felger

How does a weary world practice joy?

By dancing, and throwing birthday parties.

By hanging Christmas lights, and holding sleepy babies.

By singing loudly, and looking for good news.

By telling the story of Jesus, and showing up for our community.

There are a million ways to practice joy.

So today we light the candle of joy as a reminder and a charge.

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

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

If you spend any time with a child, you will quickly notice that children see the world differently. For a child, a ladybug is a miracle. A pine tree is a wonder. Curiosity is a love language, and water is not only for survival, but for joy. As adults, we forget this language of awe and wonder, and when we do, we distance ourselves from God.

In confession, we have the opportunity to close that distance. So let us return to God with hearts wide open. Let us return to God in prayer. Join me in the prayer of confession:

Holy God,

Somewhere in our childhood we face pressure to outgrow awe.

We turn into adults who obsess over data and facts.

**We praise those who have answers,
and assume that wonder is an answerless game.**

Forgive us for closing that door to you.

Remind us that the kingdom of God belongs to children.

**Teach us the ways of awe and wonder,
so that like Zechariah,**

**when we find ourselves speechless,
our first words will be words of praise.**

With hearts open wide, we pray, amen.

Family of faith, Just as we marvel at mountains and newborns, at sunrises and sunsets, God marvels at us. There is nothing you could do or leave undone that could prevent God from loving you. So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

We are forgiven.

We are loved.

We belong to God. Amen.

LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of the universe, make our hearts porous. Open our eyes, as if for the first time, so that we might see your world with awe and wonder once again. We often approach scripture with an analytical lens, intellectualizing the stories heard, bringing historical context and textual criticism to the table. For just a moment, pause those instincts to make room for wonder. Help us greet this text with awe and gratitude before we begin dissecting it for truth. For I am confident, that in doing so, we will not only find you in the hallways of our thoughts, but in the pathways of our hearts. With gratitude we pray: keep us open. Amen.

RESPONSIVE READING Psalm 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

**Then our mouth was filled with laughter
and our tongue with shouts of joy;**
then it was said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”

**The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.**

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.

**May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.**
Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
**shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.**

SPECIAL MUSIC

Glenna Muir

GOSPEL READING Luke 1:57-66

Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, “No; he is to be called John.” They said to

her, "None of your relatives has this name." Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.

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

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

Pastor Carla

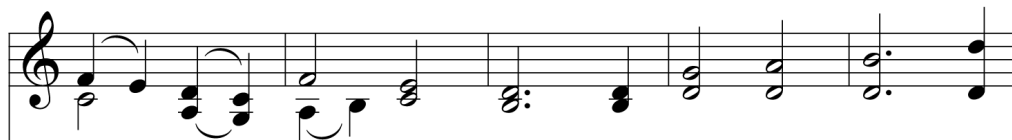
RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE

*HYMN OF THE DAY GTG 93

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates



1 Lift up your heads, ye might - y gates; be - hold the
2 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a
3 Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to



King of glo - ry waits; the King of kings is
tem - ple, set a - part from earth - ly use for
thee; here, Lord, a - bid. Let me thy in - ner



draw - ing near; the Sav - ior of the world is here.
heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.
pres - ence feel; thy grace and love in me re - veal.

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 136

Go Tell It on the Mountain

Refrain: **Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills and everywhere
go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born!**

**2 The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo! above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth. (refrain)**

**1 While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. (refrain)**

**3 Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. (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

Community Presbyterian Church

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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

Monday, December 18

6:00 pm Building Usage: Med City Tai Chi

Tuesday, December 19

12:00 pm Bulletin Information Due

6:30 pm Session Meeting

7:00 pm Building Use: Mission Aid Network

Wednesday, December 20

6:30 am Prayer Group at CPC

Thursday, December 21

5:30 pm Building Usage: Labranza de Dios

Sunday, December 24 Christmas Eve

6:00 pm Worship - Onsite and Online
(no morning worship at CPC)



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@cpcrochester.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	Carol Jones
Advent Candle Lighter	Bruce Felger
Special Music	Glenna Muir
IT Support	Bruce Felger