

Community Presbyterian Church  
open hearted, open minded



**December 22, 2024**

Welcome to worship this morning!

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

## WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### PRELUDE

#### \*CALL TO WORSHIP

In this weary world,

**we sing of joy.**

In this fragile world,

**we lift each other up.**

In this beautiful world,

**we look for God.**

In this tender world,

**we hold onto hope.**

This is the invitation of faith.

So in this time of worship, may we sing, lift up, look for, and hold onto our with-us God.

**With hope in our hearts, amen!**

#### OPENING HYMN GTG 121

**O little town of Bethlehem,  
how still we see thee lie!**

**Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
the silent stars go by.**

**Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
the everlasting light;**

**the hopes and fears of all the years  
are met in thee tonight.**

**2 For Christ is born of Mary  
and, gathered all above,  
while mortals sleep, the angels keep  
their watch of wondering love.**

**O morning stars, together  
proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the king,  
and peace to all on earth.**

#### O Little Town Of Bethlehem

**3 How silently, how silently,  
the wondrous gift is given!**

**So God imparts to human hearts  
the blessings of his heaven.**

**No ear may hear his coming,  
but in this world of sin,**

**where meek souls will receive him, still  
the dear Christ enters in.**

**4 O holy child of Bethlehem,  
descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin and enter in;  
be born in us today.**

**We hear the Christmas angels  
the great glad tidings tell;**

**O come to us; abide with us,  
our Lord Emmanuel!**

CANDLE LIGHTING LITURGY LOVE

In a weary and worn world, how do we begin again? Where do we start?

**Let us begin with tenderness.**

**Let us begin with our hearts on our sleeve.**

**Let us begin from a place of vulnerability and hope.**

**Let us begin with love.**

Yes, let us start with love. Today we light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love.

**May the warmth of these lights be our cornerstone.**

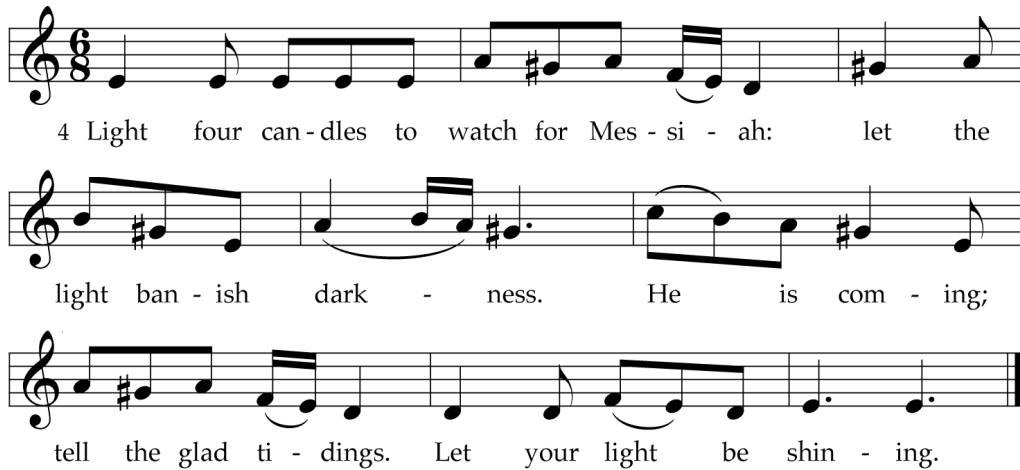
**May the truth in these lights help us begin again.**

May it be so! Amen.

CANDLE LIGHTING RESPONSE GTG 85

Light One Candle

vs. 4



4 Light four can - dles to watch for Mes - si - ah: let the  
light ban - ish dark - ness. He is com - ing;  
tell the glad ti - dings. Let your light be shin - ing.

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CALL TO CONFESSION

Friends, Hope can feel slippery. One moment we may believe that change will come, that good will win, that the suffering of today will not be the suffering of tomorrow. The next moment we can receive word of more gun violence, of more mudslinging, or yet another missile headed toward a group of humans. Hope can feel slippery. Fortunately for us, God's grace is not. No matter what we are able to hold, God is able to hold onto us. So trusting that God's grace does not let us go, join me in the prayer of confession:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Gracious God,

You paint pictures of what could be,

**but we declare those visions impossible.**

You speak of the lion lying down with the lamb,

**but we spout skepticism and uncertainty.**

You dream of a more just day,

**but we poke holes in the plan, unable to fathom that horizon.**

Forgive us for losing sight of hope.

**Forgive us for assuming that what we see is all there is.**

Open up our hearts to see the world as you see it.

**Open up our hearts to risk hope, to dream dreams,  
and to not be afraid of either. With gratitude we pray, amen.**

Friends, No matter what you hold onto, and no matter what you let slip through your hands, God is holding onto you. That good news will never change. So hear and believe the good news of the Gospel: Today is a new day. Today, we have reason to hope. Today, we are forgiven. And the same will be true tomorrow. Thanks be to God for a love like that. **Amen.**

## LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God, The stories of Advent are stories many of us have heard before. We've arranged the nativity scenes. We've read the children's books. We've seen the movies. We've sung the songs. But as we come to your scripture this morning, we pray: help us begin again. Clear the distractions from our minds. Center us in this space. Move through the protective barriers we surround ourselves with and speak to us here and now. We are listening. We are hopeful. Amen.

### GOSPEL READING

Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

## SPECIAL MUSIC

### GOSPEL READING

Luke 1:46-88

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.

Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,

for the Mighty One has done great things for me,

and holy is his name;

indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones

and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things

and sent the rich away empty.

He has come to the aid of his child Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

according to the promise he made to our ancestors,

to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

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.

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:  
“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.  
He has raised up a mighty savior for us  
in the house of his child David,  
as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,  
that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.  
Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors  
and has remembered his holy covenant,  
the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,  
to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,  
might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness  
in his presence all our days.  
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High,  
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,  
to give his people knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of their sins.  
Because of the tender mercy of our God,  
the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
to shine upon those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

This is the promise of God to our ancestors and to us.

**Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

Pastor Tim

## RESPONDING TO GOD’S GRACE

### INVITATION TO OFFERING

Rejoicing in the Lord always, we give thanks for the Word made flesh. With grateful hearts let us offer our whole selves to God.

*An offering plate is placed near the back of the room to receive your offerings and is available before, during the hymn of the day and shortly following the service.*

\*HYMN OF THE DAY GTG 98

To a Maid Whose Name Was Mary



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,  
3 But Mar-y was most trou-bled to hear the an-gel's word.  
4 "Fear not, for God is with you, and you shall bear a child.  
5 "How shall this be?" said Mar - y, "I am not yet a wife."  
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;  
What was the an - gel say - ing? It trou-bled her to hear,  
His name shall be called Je - sus, God's off-spring from on high.  
The an - gel an-swered quick - ly, "The power of the Most 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!"  
to hear the an - gel's mes - sage, it trou-bled her to hear.  
And he shall reign for - ev - er, for - ev - er reign on high."  
will come up - on you short - ly, your child shall be God's child."  
"So be it; I am read - y ac - cord - ing to your word."

### PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God Most High, receive the gifts of our lives as an offering of gratitude for your grace. Overshadow us with your Holy Spirit and let it be with us according to your word, for nothing is impossible with you. **Amen.**

### JOYS AND CONCERNS/PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Holy God, We come to you today feeling tenderhearted. We are tenderhearted because life is hard. Our spirits are bruised from the ups and downs, from the onslaught of disappointment, fear, and grief. In the midst of this tenderness, how do we risk hope? How do we hold onto you? With honesty on our tongues, we come to you today, God, to ask for your help. Show us how to hope. Draw near to the most vulnerable places in our lives, to the places where hope feels out of reach.

Trusting in the steadfast love of the Lord, let us pray for the fulfillment of God's promises, saying: Emmanuel, come; **O come and save us.**

We pray for the church . . .

Teach us to follow Christ our Lord,  
who offered himself as a sacrifice of praise  
and sought to do your will in all things.  
Emmanuel, come; **O come and save us.**

We pray for the world . . .

Lift up those who are poor and vulnerable;  
cast down those who are mighty and proud.  
Show us all the power of your saving grace.  
Emmanuel, come; **O come and save us.**

We pray for loved ones . . .

Look with love on all who need your care.  
Dry the tears of those who mourn  
and fill the empty with your blessing.  
Emmanuel, come; **O come and save us.**

We pray for this community . . .

Help us to stand with those who are in trouble,  
feeding the hungry and strengthening the weak,  
so that all may live in peace and safety.

*We invite you to name your prayers for this community.*

Emmanuel, come; **O come and save us.**

With all the tenderhearted hope we can muster, we join our voices together to pray the words your son taught us to pray, saying. . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come, thy 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 lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

# SENDING INTO THE WORLD TO LOVE AND SERVE

\*CLOSING HYMN GTG 110

Love Has Come



1 Love has come: a light in the dark - ness!  
2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der.  
3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us!



Love shines forth in the Beth - le - hem skies. See, all  
Love is God now a - sleep in the hay. See the  
Love is life ev - er - last - ing and free. Love is



heav - en has come to pro - claim it; hear how their song of  
glow in the eyes of his moth - er; what is the name her  
Je - sus with - in and a - mong us. Love is the peace our



joy a - ris - es: Love! Love! Born un - to you, a  
heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the name she  
hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the gift of



Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.  
whis - pers. Love! Love! Je - sus, Em - man - u - el.  
Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

## \*CHARGE AND BLESSING

As you leave this place,  
may you have the wisdom to lean on one other.  
May you have the courage to hold onto hope,  
the compassion to do the good that is yours to do,  
and the confidence to trust that God sees you as a blessing.  
For in a world full of dead ends,  
Advent invites us to begin again.  
So start here.  
Start now.  
Start with love and begin again.  
In the name of Christ,  
our new beginning,  
go in peace.

**Thanks be to God! Alleluia!**

## POSTLUDE

### **Lessons From the Schoolyard by Rev. Sarah Speed**

A baby bird fell out of her nest.  
She cried and pattered about on the sidewalk below.  
We children formed a circle,  
amazed at how small her bobbing body was.  
Eventually a sixth grader scooped her up.  
Held her tenderly in cupped hands.  
She said, You have to be gentle.  
You have to be steady.  
You have to let her grow,  
so that one day she can fly.  
I think hope is a lot like that baby bird.  
Hold it with both hands.  
Let it grow.  
One day, it will fly.



**HOPE IS WORTH THE RISK**

## *Magnify*

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Luke 1:46-55

Acrylic painting with mixed media on canvas

The central image in this quilt square design is of Mary's soul, an abstract and concentric shape that begins to look like an eye. It originates as an outward spiraling abstraction of the soul magnifying God. For Mary's soul magnifies her creator. In her song, Mary honors her God who mirrors the life her son will live: lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry, coming to the aid of God's people, bringing down the powerful, sending the rich away empty, and scattering the proud.



One Advent, the art team at my church created a set of banners based on the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah in Luke 1. In the design, Elizabeth (Mary's cousin) stood, full with child. Surrounding her were patterns of tablets and writing tools (representing muted Zechariah's need to communicate through writing) and patterns of hands (representing Elizabeth's caretaking in raising up her son, John). The banners hung in the sanctuary throughout the whole Advent season. On December 24th, the pastor told me, "It's Christmas eve; I have to preach the Magnificat. Elizabeth will have to be Mary today."

It occurs to me that we are all Mary today, dreaming of a better world and working toward it through right relationships and healthy communities. So why does it seem that the world keeps falling apart? Where is the "arc of justice" of which Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke? Can you see it? Can you feel it? Why does it seem so far out of reach? Like Moses on the mountaintop, can you see the promised land? As global politics heat up, it feels so far away.

Mary is on the verge of delivering God's depth and beauty into the world; God will be embodied by a child. Mary, the earthly mother of our incarnate God, can see it. She can see hope, justice, and right relationships. In the Magnificat, she speaks the way of God into being, just before Jesus is born. Like my mother whispering in my ear when I was a child, calling forth whom I shall become, Mary speaks her dreams into existence.

—Hannah Garrity

# Community Presbyterian Church

open hearted, open minded

**Sunday, December 22**

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

2:30 pm Building Usage: Labranza de Dios

**Monday, December 23**

Office Closed

**Tuesday, December 24**

Office Closed

**6:00 pm** Christmas Eve Worship  
- Onsite and Online

**Wednesday, December 25 Merry Christmas!**

Office Closed

**Thursday, December 26**

Office Closed

5:30 pm Building Usage: Labranza de Dios

**Sunday, December 29**

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

2:30 pm Building Usage: Labranza de Dios

*The office will be closed December 23-26, closed December 31-January 1, and closed January 6-8. The office will be open Monday-December 30, Thursday-January 2 and Thursday-January 9. Annual Report items are due Sunday, January 12th.*



Judy Leal

Jane and Ed Burgstaler family,  
especially daughters Jenny & Elissa

Connie Holst

Nellie Brovold's mother, Jacqueline

Sage Hall

Jennifer Hall

The family & friends of Frank Jones

The family & friends of Carla Werre

*To be added to the prayer list, please contact the office: 507-280-9291 or via email: [office@cpcrochester.org](mailto:office@cpcrochester.org).*

## Serving in Worship Today

Guest Preacher	Tim Gerarden
Liturgist	Margie Petersen
Advent Candlelighters	Amanda Ross
	Sue Chipman
Special Music	CPC Choir
IT Support	Louis Bouchard

## Church Staff

Music Director	Jennifer Taylor
Pianist	Peggy Pillers
Custodian	Nancy Sanford
Office Manager	Stephanie Pasch