

Trinity-Grace United Church
December 17th, 2023
Third Sunday in Advent: "JOY"

GATHERING

PRELUDE

WELCOME

THE JESSE TREE

The symbols for the third week of Advent are:

Woman Gathering Sheaves (*Ruth*): Ruth 1:1 to 2:3

Lamp (*Samuel*): I Samuel 3

Stump with Roots (*Jesse*): Ruth 4: 13-17, I Samuel 16: 1-13; Isaiah 11: 1-10

Harp (*David*): I Samuel 16: 14-23

Temple (*Solomon*): I Kings 3: 16-28; 6: 1-4

Raven (*Elijah*): I Kings 17: 1-16

Crown (*Bathsheba*): 2 Samuel 11

INTROIT: "Joy Shall Come" (VU 23)

(1st time - soloist, 2nd time - All)

Joy shall come, even to the wilderness
And the parched land shall then know great gladness
As the rose, as the rose, shall deserts blossom
Deserts like a garden blossom.

For living streams shall give cool water
In the desert stream shall flow
For living streams shall give cool water
In the desert streams shall flow.

OPENING RESPONSES:

(One/All)

Keep watch! Look up! For soon the heavenly host will appear
and proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth!

**We watch for the light and listen for the voice of God's messengers
today, and every day.**

Do not be afraid!

God's messengers proclaim good news of great joy for all people.

**We gather like shepherds and sheep in a field,
waiting for the good news of great joy.**

In the darkest of nights and brightest of days we watch and we wait.

Good news is on the way. Come, let us worship!

CANDLE LIGHTING

Sing: "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

**O come Beloved, hear your peoples' plea -
The wounded soul, the homeless refugee.
May 'Welcome' be our own heart's call,
'Till there be joy and justice for us all.**

**Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel,
shall come to thee wherever you may dwell.**

Words by Juanita L. Austin – Nov. 29 2017 (used with permission) | Tune: Veni Emmanuel

Lighting the Candles of Hope, Peace and Joy

One/All:

In our most desperate times, by day or by night, the hope of Christ may be found.
We watch and we wait to witness the hope of heaven making a place here on earth.

We light the candle of hope, because hope has come to us.

The candle of Hope is lit

When we are overwhelmed with conflict without or within, we turn to the peace of Christ, that peace which the world cannot give.

Today we light the candle of peace, because peace has come to us.

The candle of Peace is lit

On this third Sunday, our theme is joy. Joy is like an underground spring that wells up within us, but it is also a choice, an attitude. Like a muscle, it needs to be exercised. Like a seedling, it needs to be watered. So today we open ourselves to joy, trusting that it has already been planted within us.

We light the candle of Joy,
A gift from our loving God. Help us find you today.

The candle of Joy is lit

Prayer

(Leader)

Emmanuel, God-with-us in light and darkness,
you meet us wherever we gather.

Whether shepherding in fields, protesting in streets,
connecting online, or meeting in buildings,
your Spirit finds us, enlivens us, and sustains us.

We invite you to bring joy into our places of sadness, fear,
anger, and hopelessness— wherever there is suffering among us.

On this day of joy and gladness,
call our attention to the good news of great joy available to all.

And make us collaborators and co-messengers of that joy
as we minister to one another in worship.

Amen.

Response: (MV 220)

Joy shines in the solitary star,

**Faith is the inner light;
You and I together mirror the Light of lights,
And illumine the pathway home.**

HYMN: “Good Christian, Friends, Rejoice” VU 35 (v.1,2)

**1 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Give ye heed to what we say: News! News!
Jesus Christ is born today.
Ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!**

**2 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice!
Now ye hear of endless bliss: Joy! Joy!
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He hath opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!**

PRAYER FOR WHOLENESS

(One/All)

God-with-us in light and darkness,
you created a world with abundant sources of joy,
but we have not always received your good gifts.

**We have turned to instant satisfactions which fade away quickly.
We have used our planet’s resources for brief ease and entertainment,
even when the damage is lasting.**

We have spent money on consumables that rob the dignity and livelihood of labourers.
We have chosen the latest technology or opportunity over the most profound justice.
We have judged the joy of others.

**Forgive us, God.
Help us find joy in sustainable resources and lasting places.
Help us begin again today.
Amen.**

(Silence is held)

A WORD OF GRACE

SHARING PEACE

One: May the peace of Christ be with you all!

All: And also with you!

We take a moment to greet each other and share a sign of peace

ENCOUNTERING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

(One)

God-with-us in light and darkness, bring us your message of joy today.

We are not afraid to hear your good news.

Help us to listen with open hearts and holy imagination

to discover the message you have for us today,

as we engage with your story revealed in scripture.

Amen.

THE NATIVITY STORY: "Round the Back Door" - Gathered Pageant

REFLECTION by Rev. Sandra Nixon

RESPONDING

HYMN: "Dream A Dream" MV 158 (v.1,2,4)

During the hymn, the offering box is brought forward

1. Dream a dream, a hopeful dream,

as children do on Christmas Eve,
imaginings, surprising things
to hold and to believe.

2. **Dream a time, this Christmas time,
when no one's hungry or afraid;
that weapons go and harvests grow,
that friends are met and made. (met and made.)**

4. **Dream a gift, the Christmas gift
that changes every thing we see:
the shimmering of angel wing,
the Child, the Mystery.**

OFFERING OUR GIFTS

Trinity-Grace is grateful for the many ways we are gifted and called to contribute to God's mission through this faith community.

Prayer of Dedication

(Leader)

God-with-us in light and darkness,
we bring the fruit of your abundance back to our community
with a spirit of gratitude and joy.
We give gratefully and boldly,
trusting your spirit working through our faith community
will use these gifts to build and grow works of love and justice
on earth as it is in heaven.
Amen.

CONNECTING IN COMMUNITY

We share announcements, insights, joys & concerns.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Periods of silence will be left for you to offer your own prayers

THE PRAYER OF THE DISCIPLES (The Lord's Prayer)

You can use the words printed in the order of service, or pray in whatever words or language you would prefer...

(All)

**Our loving Source of life,
may your name be held sacred by all creation.
May your reign come, and your holy will be done,
here among us,
as in the great communion of saints.**

**Provide what we need to sustain us this day.
Forgive our sins,
as we forgive the hurts others cause us.
Keep us from trials too great to bear,
and strengthen us to resist evil.**

**For yours is the realm of love,
yours the energy of life,
and yours the true essence of all that is,
now and always.
Amen.**

HYMN: "We Shall Go Out With Joy" (VU 884)

SING 2x

**You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace
The mountains and the hills will break forth before you,
There'll be shouts of joy, and all trees of the field
will clap, will clap their hands.**

And all the trees of the field will *clap* their hands ()
The trees of the field will *clap* their hands (**)
The trees of the field will *clap* their hands (**)
While you go out with joy.**

AFFIRMATION OF JOY

(One/All)

Siblings in Christ, let us proclaim our faith:
Since the beginning, joy has been part of our story.

**“God saw everything that God had made,
and indeed, it was very good.”**

(Genesis 1:31)

SENDING

(Leader)

And now go forth now with joy,
For God’s love is emerging into this world;
Emerging in every act of love and kindness and solidarity;
Emerging in you and me.

BLESSING

As our worship concludes, our prayers rise as we sing:

SUNG RESPONSE

**In this season filled with expectation
We await the holy child;
God who comes to dwell among us
Bringing joy to earth beguiled.
As God’s people, may we go
To the world, our joy to show.**

(Tune: VU 62)

POSTLUDE